MIXED MEDIA *explained*

IMPACTFUL INTERVIEWS AND PRACTICAL GUIDES INSIDE!

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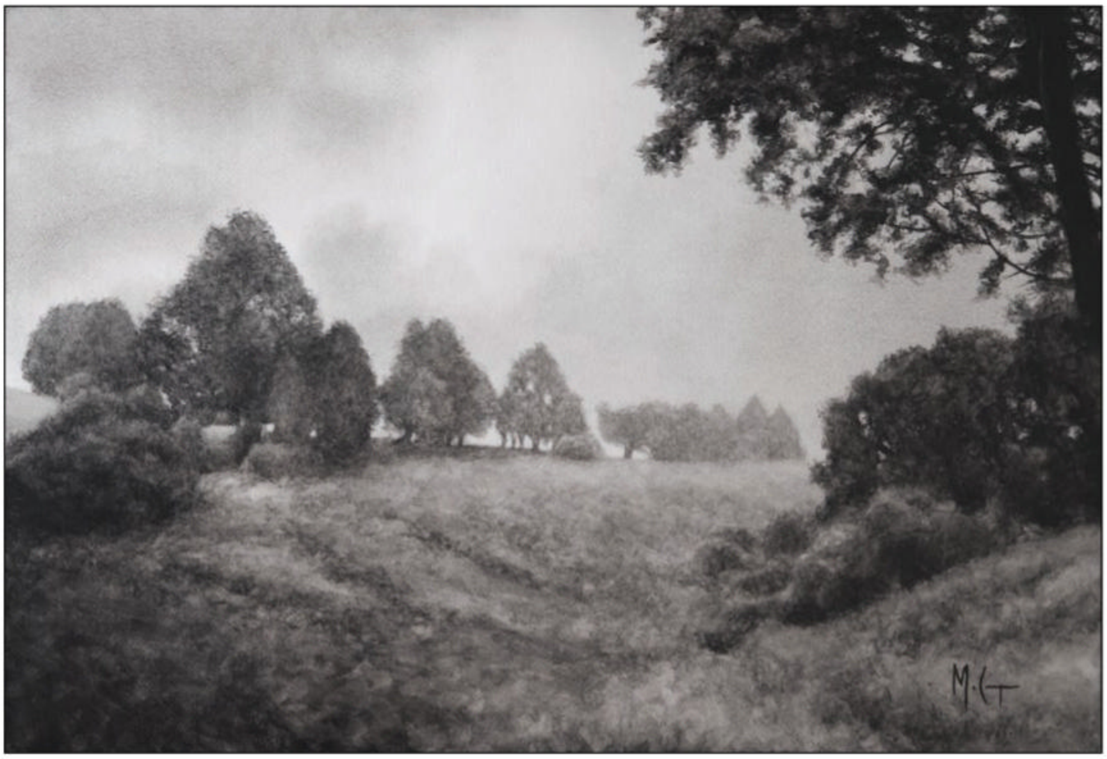
ALVARO CASTAGNET ON JUDGING THE BRITISH ART PRIZE

CAPTIVATING LANDSCAPES



"Longing" 15.75 inches x 22 inches, Nitram Fusain Aquarelle on Arches Paper

NITRAM
fusain AQUARELLE
CHARCOAL WATERCOLOR
FUSAIN HYDROSOLUBLE
50g 1.75oz
NITRAM

Nitram Fusain Aquarelle
Charcoal Watercolour 50 g

WITH NITRAM AQUARELLE

"Nitram Aquarelle has become one of my favourite mediums.

There is a bit of a learning curve to working with it, as it behaves a little differently than regular watercolor, but it is 100% worth it!

It lets you have a lot of control over your artwork, as it allows you to add and also subtract the pigment from the paper!

I absolutely love the end result it gives to my works. There is an amazing texture to each brushstroke that is quite unique!"

~ Marco Campos

To watch a video of Marco Campos working with Nitram Fusain Aquarelle, please visit: **https://nitramcharcoal.com/marco-campos** or **scan the QR code.**

NITRAM
fusain AQUARELLE
with Marco Campos

Marco Campos (b.1978) is a contemporary figurative painter in Costa Rica, who works primarily in oil painting, watercolor and charcoal, among other mediums. His artistic style revolves around contemporary realism, crafted through nuanced tonal values and subtle shifts in hues, while maintaining a delicate balance between loose brushwork and intricate detail. Influenced by the works of the Old Masters, his art often resonates with powerful emotions, such as nostalgia, serenity, or melancholy. **www.marcocamposfineart.com** **Instagram: @marco.campos.artist**

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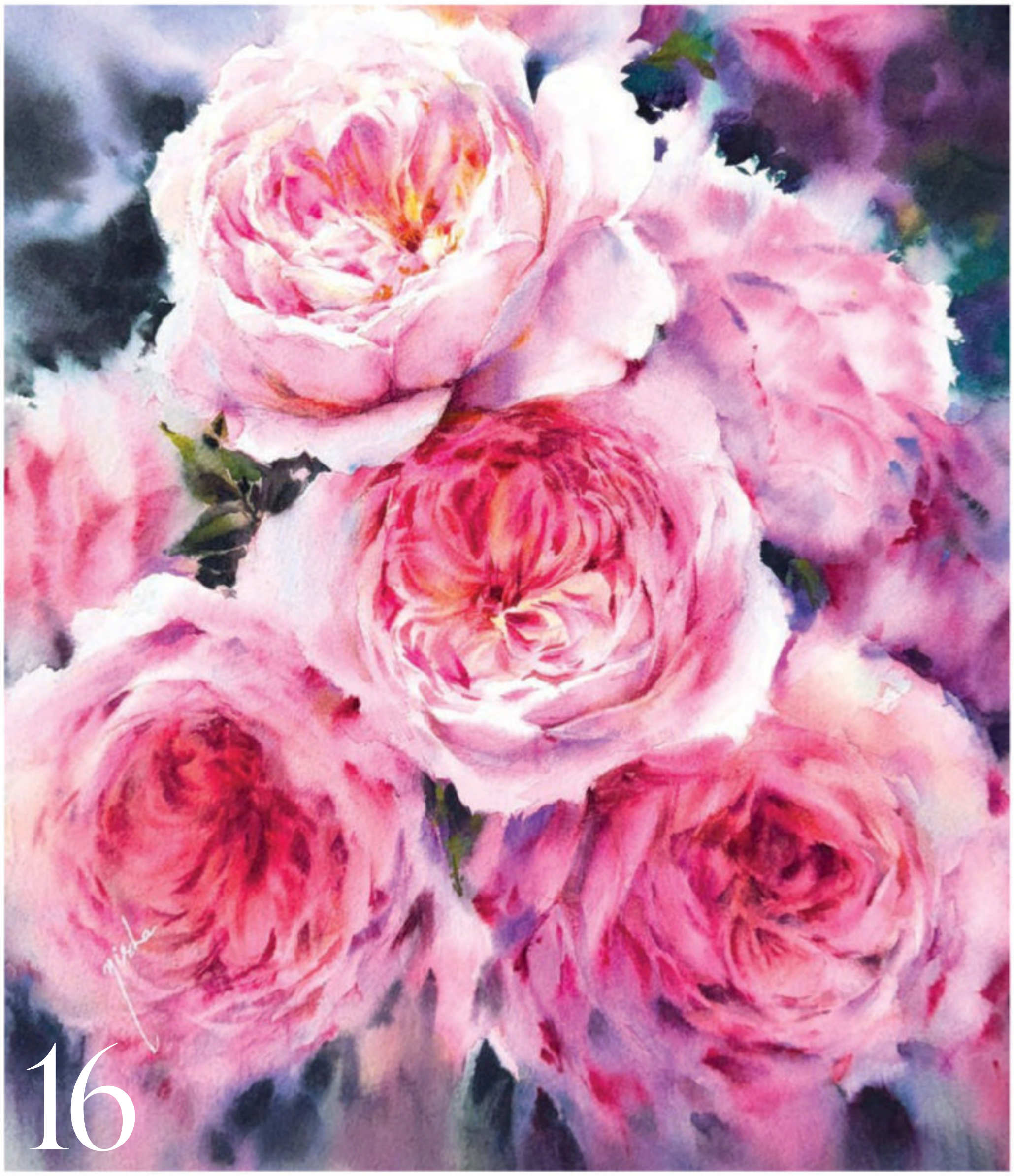
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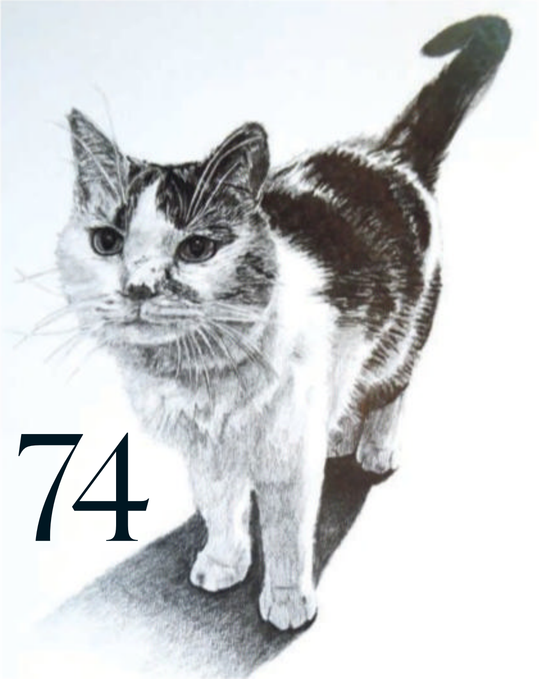
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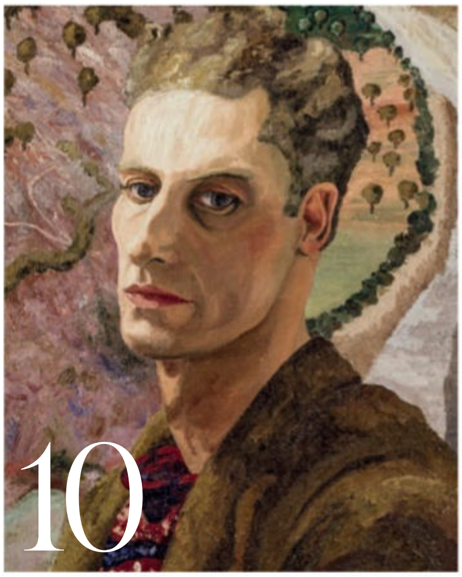
10

Maybe you're a...

...die hard watercolourist, a pastel enthusiast or an avid fan of acrylic, but you're curious about mixing it up and trying something new.

You've come to the right place.

As well as a tantalising array of subjects – including holiday scenes, landscapes, still life, pets and flowers – we have artists working in pretty much every medium who share their guidance, ideas and techniques to help you on your way.

Inspired by her father's beekeeping hobby, Emily Ponsonby uses the wax from the bees with her oil paintings to create textures through scraping and carving; the effect is truly unique. In exhibition news, we see how Jean-François Millet dabbled in oil and chalk whilst German artist Anselm Kiefer (a van Gogh devotee) uses everything from emulsion, oil, ash, acrylic, gold leaf, wire and even straw in his works. Then, we have an artist who works in ink, watercolour and digital, and those who work in acrylic, coloured pencil, oil and graphite, showing a diverse range of work that will surely spur you on to new heights.

It's the run up to this year's British Art Prize and, as per, we've got a fantastic line up of judges, not least the world-renowned watercolour master Alvaro Castagnet. He tells you what he's looking for in this year's entries. "I hope to see a wide variety of styles and fresh ideas; art that feels authentic and expresses real emotion," he says. With a deadline of 19 September, you've still got plenty of time to plan and prepare. Perhaps you might be influenced by what you see within these pages? All in all, don't be unafraid to try different mediums – and embrace the experimental.

Niki Browes Editor

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THIS MONTH'S COVER BY PAOLA

INTRODUCING

RUTH RYDER

Ruthie's vibrant ink, watercolour and digital illustrations blend colour, nostalgia and charm. With a unique eye for detail, she captures the beauty of architecture and buildings nestled within the rhythm of everyday life. Her work celebrates the places and the stories that cities quietly tell.

CRAIG ALLAN LEE ARSMA

Craig is an oil painter drawn to British coastal scenes, landscapes, cityscapes and the stories within. Elected an Associate Member of the Royal Society of Marine Artists, he's exhibited alongside the Royal Institute of Oil Painters for the past eight years at Mall Galleries.

KATIE JACOBSEN

Originally from Australia's Whitsundays and now residing in Southern California, Katie is a self-taught artist with only a few rudimentary classes under her belt. Fuelled by a zest for life and global exploration, her work blurs real-life observation with imaginative contemplation.

DAVID SCHAB

David is a professional artist and self-proclaimed 'colourist.' He paints in oil on canvas, focusing mainly on still life and landscapes. A participant in Sky Arts *Landscape Artist of the Year* he has also taken part in solo and group exhibitions and has paintings in private collections worldwide.

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Sketchbook

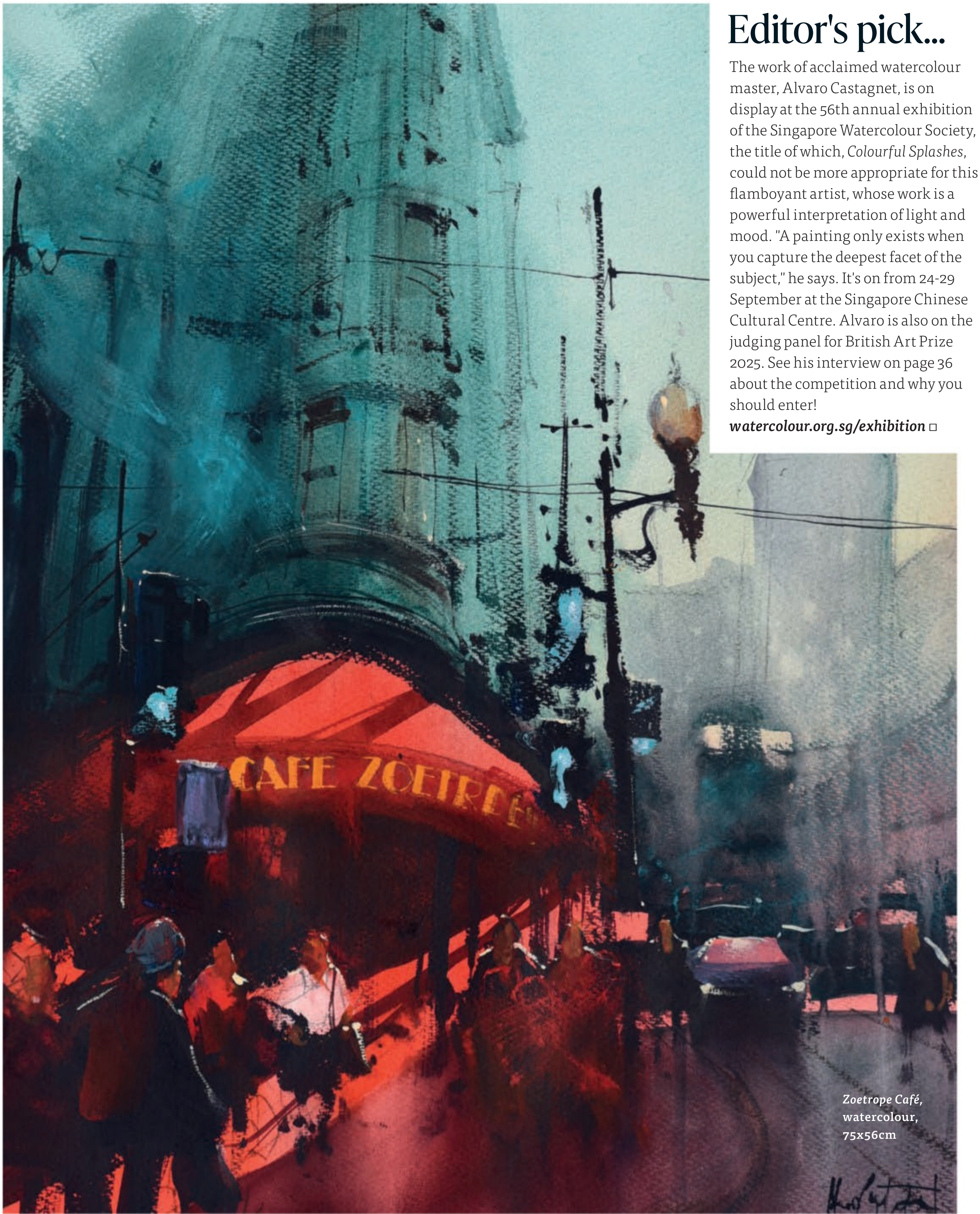
TIPS • ADVICE • EXHIBITIONS • NEWS • REVIEWS

EDITED BY SARAH EDGHILL AND RAMSHA VISTRO

Editor's pick...

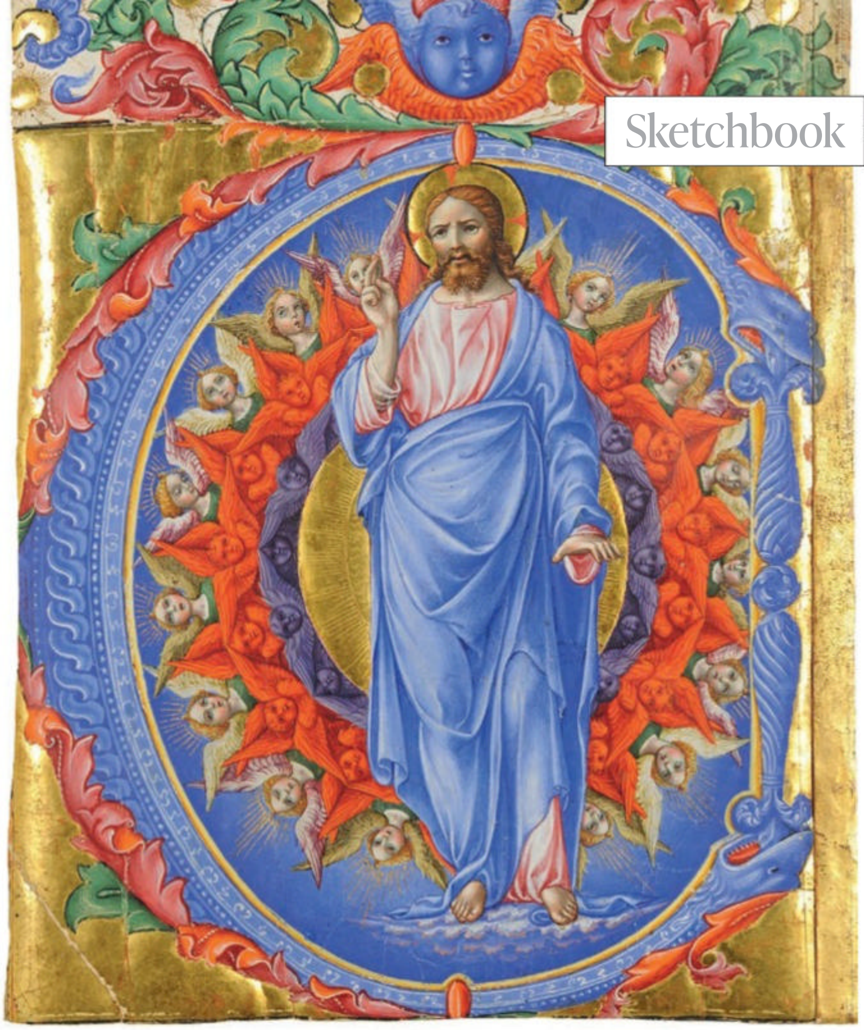
The work of acclaimed watercolour master, Alvaro Castagnet, is on display at the 56th annual exhibition of the Singapore Watercolour Society, the title of which, *Colourful Splashes*, could not be more appropriate for this flamboyant artist, whose work is a powerful interpretation of light and mood. "A painting only exists when you capture the deepest facet of the subject," he says. It's on from 24-29 September at the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre. Alvaro is also on the judging panel for British Art Prize 2025. See his interview on page 36 about the competition and why you should enter!

watercolour.org.sg/exhibition □



***Zoetrope Café*, watercolour, 75x56cm**

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



LIBERALE DA VERONA, CHRIST IN GLORY, ABOUT 1467, TEMPERA, GOLD LEAF AND INK ON VELLUM; 27.4X21.5CM. IMAGE © THE HENRY BARBER TRUST, THE BARBER INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

FRAGMENTS OF DEVOTION

Explore an online exhibition showcasing medieval illuminated manuscript cuttings from the Barber Institute and the V&A. Curated by University of Birmingham students, it reveals the art, worship and Victorian collecting of these richly decorated fragments. Featuring musical extracts and high-resolution images, the exhibition invites a multi-sensory experience of these shimmering works. Available online until 30 June 2027 at ***devotion.barber.org.uk***

BOOK OF THE MONTH

FABULOUS FLOWERS

By Sun-Kyong Clifford

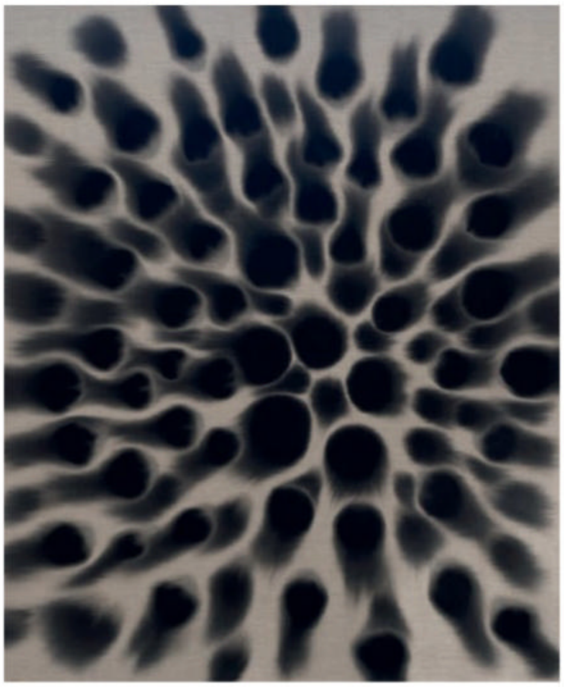
This workbook features techniques, templates and tutorials for beginner-friendly flowers with coloured pencil artist, Sun-Kyong Clifford. A British Art Prize finalist, she was featured in the August 2025 issue of *Artists & Illustrators*, describing her studio and working practice. Sun's beautiful blooms are full of colour and joy, and the techniques she describes here make them accessible and achievable.

Quarto, £17.99

COLORED PENCIL WORKBOOK
FABULOUS FLOWERS
Techniques, Templates, and Video Tutorials for Beginner-Friendly Projects
SUN-KYONG CLIFFORD
Fine Art by Sun

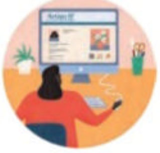
Don't miss...

In The Shyness of the Peaks, where Leonardo Anker Vandal explores what happens when ink meets raw linen. Shapes bleed and shift, creating soft, abstract forms that suggest movement, distance and restraint. Inspired by crown shyness – the natural gaps between tree canopies – this new body of work plays with ideas of connection and separation. Across three themes, Vandal focuses on symmetry and contrast, letting chance and control work side by side to create quiet, thoughtful compositions. Until 15 August 2025. ***cadogangallery.com***



LEONARDO ANKER VANDAL, THE SHYNESS OF THE PEAKS, DRIP PAINTING (WATER LILIES) 2023, INK AND WATER ON RAW BELGIAN LINEN 80X60CM, PHOTO CREDIT THE ARTIST, COURTESY OF CADOGAN GALLERY

Join us online!



These pages are packed with artistic inspiration, but if you're after more, explore the fabulous *Artists & Illustrators* website. A go-to resource for artists across all disciplines, it offers a wealth of practical guides, exciting competitions and engaging interviews. Discover even more creative resources and inspiration. See you there. ***artistsandillustrators.co.uk***

THE DIARY

Open calls, prizes and artist opportunities

26 AUGUST

Prizes of up to £1,000 for the London Group Open, to be held at the Copeland Gallery. Entries in any medium from UK-based artists over 18. ***thelondongroup.com***

31 AUGUST

Submissions invited from contemporary artists working in all mediums to the Hunt Museum Open Submission Exhibition 2025, held in Limerick. €15 entry. ***huntmuseum.com***

1 SEPTEMBER

Submit representational or abstract art depicting natural scenery and landforms to Landscapes 2025, run by Fusion Art. Open to international artists, $25 entry. ***fushionartps.com***

15 SEPTEMBER 2025

Enter the Ingram Prize, a leading award for emerging UK artists with mentoring, acquisitions as well as solo exhibition opportunities. ***ingramcollection.com***

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YOU WILL LOVE THIS ART COURSE!

the Seasons Art Class

Our fun part time course runs over 3 months – plenty of time to master your new hobby!

LEARN TO PAINT PEOPLE AND PLACES

Over the 14 week course you will explore four different media: **Drawing, Painting with Watercolour, Acrylics,** and **Oil Pastels**, highlighting their individual characteristics, learning the basic techniques and secrets needed to create beautiful pieces of original art.

NEW COURSE
We are now taking enquiries for our New Art Classes.
ENQUiRE NOW to learn how to get started.

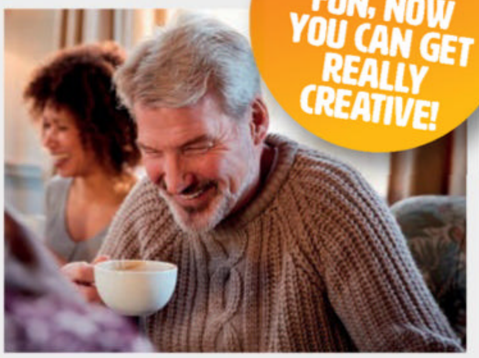
STEP BY STEP EASY LESSONS

- Fun part-time course
- 14 Week course, 3-hour classes, once a week
- Morning or afternoon sessions
- Beginners to improvers
- Fun, easy, social event
- You bring pencils and paper, we supply everything else
- Lots of cups of tea!

FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

On completion of the course you will have 12 pieces of original art to cherish forever. From faces, figures, friends and family, to beautiful seaside vistas. Even if you have never picked up a brush before, we will guide you through to make it easy and fun!

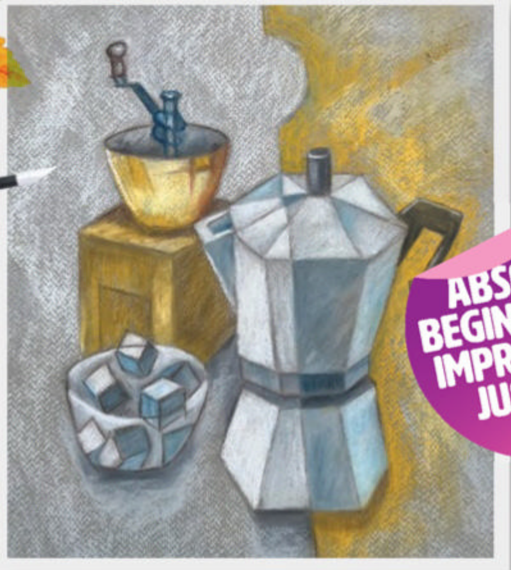
This is an extremely enjoyable way to develop your creative side, make new friends and really enjoy the next few months

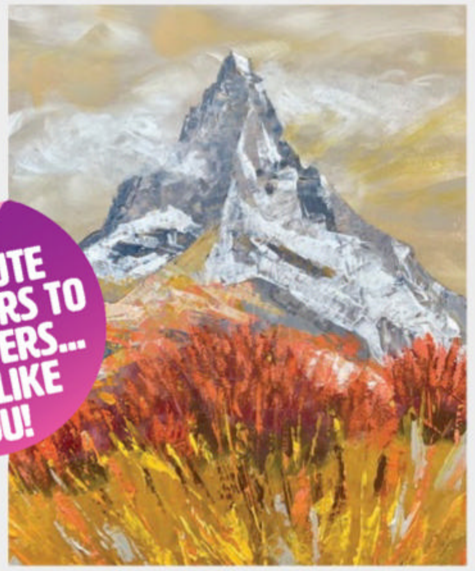


EASY FUN, NOW YOU CAN GET REALLY CREATIVE!

LIMITED PLACES

To maintain a high standard to our classes and the tuition you will receive, classes are kept to small numbers – so available places are strictly limited!





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ART & NATURE

The Art History Festival returns from 15-21 September 2025 with a nature-inspired programme across the UK. Free events include talks, workshops, tours and discussions exploring art's connection to the natural world and its impact on wellbeing. Highlights feature global perspectives, from Chinese calligraphy to eco-art, with events both in-person and online. The festival celebrates how art and nature together can heal and inspire communities, making art history accessible to everyone. ***festival.forarthistory.org.uk***

THE JULIA AND HANS RAUSING ROOM

LIFE DRAWING NATIONAL GALLERY © HYDAR DEWACHI

DISCERNING EYE

Got bold ideas in a small format? The ING Discerning Eye exhibition is back for 2025, calling all UK-based artists to submit small-scale works (max 50cm) for a shot at exhibiting at Mall Galleries, London – and winning prizes totalling over £13,000. Six influential selectors, including Curtis Holder and Polly Morgan, will hand-pick their favourites for a unique show running 14-23 November 2025, plus a virtual edition until 1 January 2026. All media welcome – painting, sculpture, photography, film and more. This is your chance to gain exposure, connect with top art influencers, and boost your career. The deadline to enter is 28 August 2025. ***artopps.co.uk/de2025***

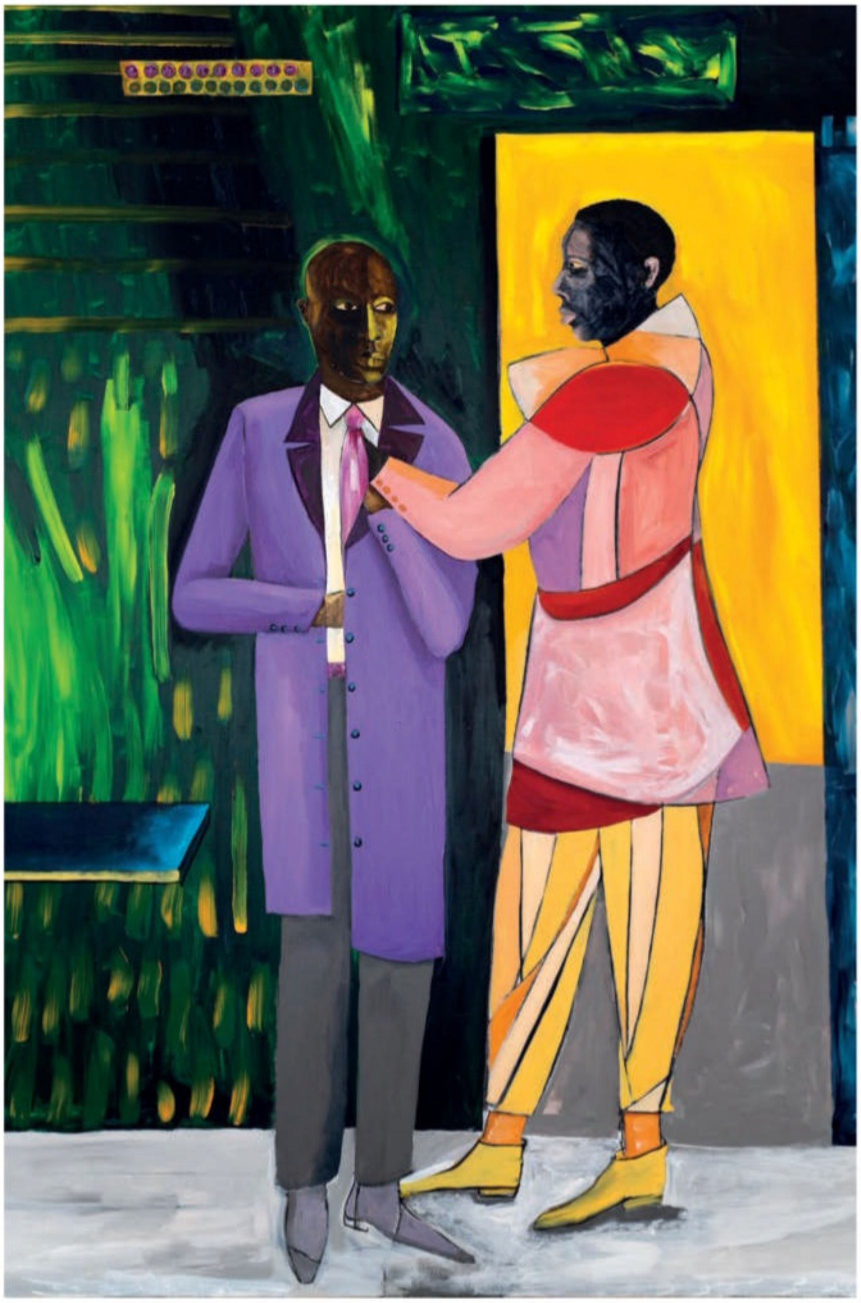
PHOTO: MICHAEL POLLARD

LOWRY IN MOTION

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, The Lowry, Salford's arts and culture institution, has launched a free, immersive experience of LS Lowry's painting, *Going To The Match*, which shows crowds streaming into a football match on a Saturday afternoon. Developed with world-renowned creative studio, Layers of Reality, LOWRY 360 is a six-minute audio-visual experience that surrounds audiences with the sights and sounds of *Going To The Match*, transporting them into the painting before they can experience the original painting firsthand immediately after. Tickets, which are free, also allow entry to the Modern Life exhibition, where many of Lowry's paintings are on display. On until 24 December. ***thelowry.com***

Exhibitions

THE BEST ART SHOWS TO VISIT FROM THIS MONTH ONWARDS



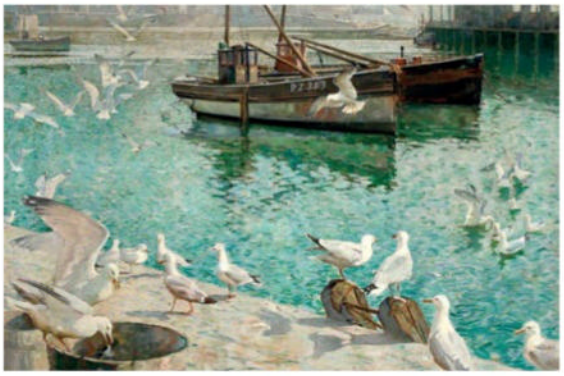
LUBAINA HIMID, 'FAVOURS FOR YEARS TO COME,' FROM THE SERIES 'HOW MAY I HELP YOU?,' 2025, ACRYLIC AND CHARCOAL ON CANVAS. COURTESY HOLLY BUSH GARDENS, LONDON AND GREENE NAFTALI, NEW YORK. PHOTO: GAVIN RENSHAW

LUBAINA HIMID WITH MAGDA STAWARSKA

Until 2 November 2025

A leading figure in the British Black Art movement, Lubaina Himid is known for her bold, narrative-driven canvases that amplify marginalised histories. In this new exhibition at Kettle's Yard, she collaborates with artist Magda Stawarska to explore absence, memory, and the gaps in life stories – asking who gets remembered and who is left out. A powerful meditation on voice, visibility, and the politics of storytelling.

Kettle's Yard, Castle Street, Cambridge, CB3 0AQ, UK. kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk

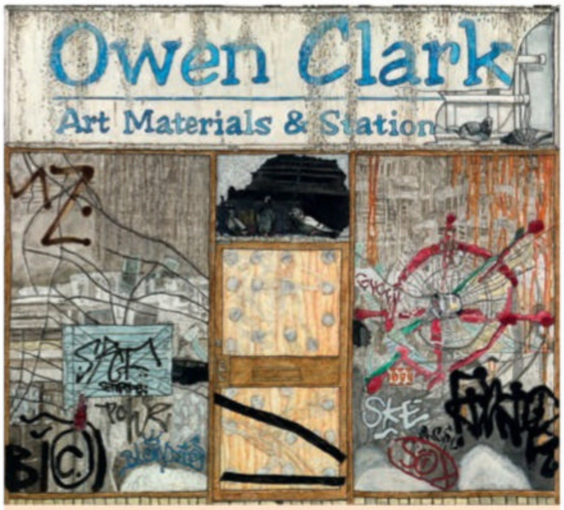


CHARLES WALTER SIMPSON (1885-1971). WHEELING GULLS, GLITTERING WATER, C.1944 – ROYAL INSTITUTION OF CORNWALL, CORNWALL MUSEUM & ART GALLERY, TRURO. © THE ARTIST'S ESTATE

BIRDS: THE ART OF CORNWALL'S BIRDLIFE

Until 4 October 2025

This exhibition explores the connection between Cornwall's rich birdlife and its artistic heritage. Spanning works from the 1870s to the present, it features paintings by Charles Simpson, Frank Heath and Kurt Jackson, alongside Victorian engravings, taxidermy, photography and film. Themed displays spotlight gulls, estuary birds and domestic fowl, while conservation issues bring urgent relevance to this visual celebration. ***Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Cornwall, TR18 4HE, UK. penleehouse.org.uk***

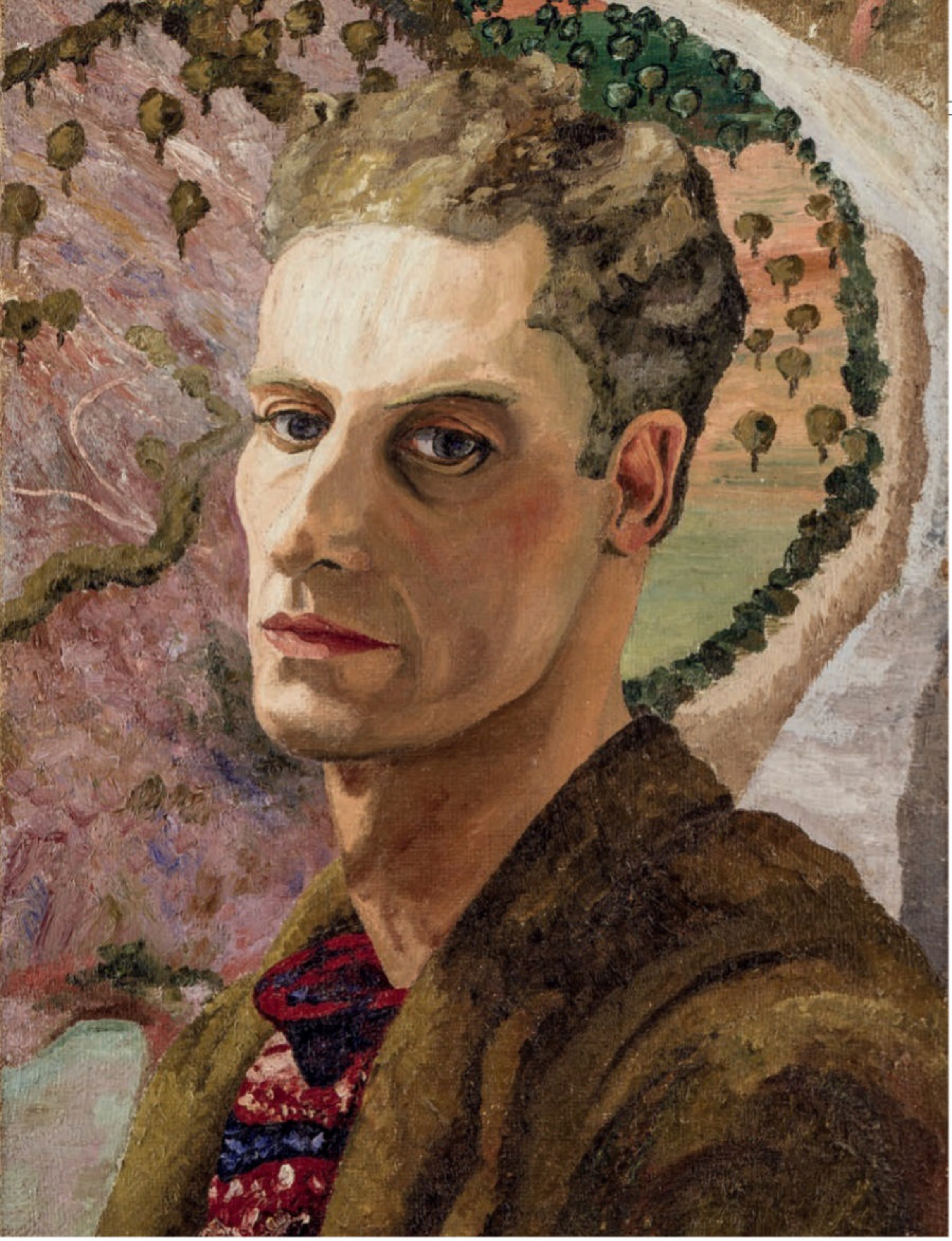


IMAGINARY VIEW OF OWEN CLARK IN RUINS, 2022. SIGNED VERSO. WATERCOLOUR, INDELIBLE PEN ON PAPER, 36X37CM © MICHAEL LANDY. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND THOMAS DANE GALLERY. PHOTO: TODD-WHITE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

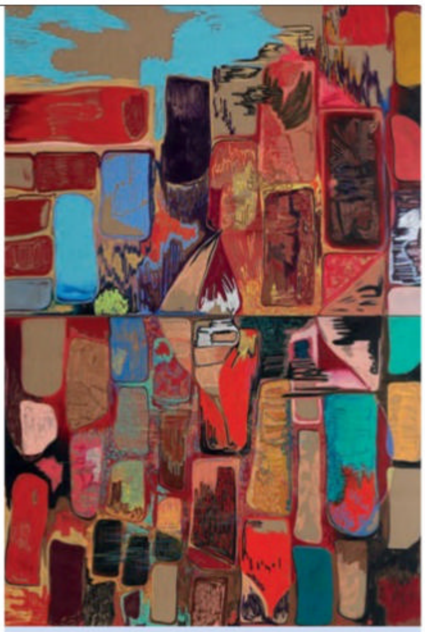
MICHAEL LANDY: LOOK

27 September 2025 to 15 March 2026

Michael Landy's first exhibition in Sussex showcases intensely personal drawings from 2004–2005. Known for large installations, Landy reveals a quieter side, reflecting on his experience with testicular cancer and his father's tunnelling accident. ***Hastings Contemporary, Rock-a-Nore Road, Hastings, TN34 3DW, UK.***



CEDRIC MORRIS, 'CEDRIC MORRIS,' (C1930) © THE ESTATE OF SIR CEDRIC MORRIS, PHOTO: NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY



RACHEL JONES, GATED CANYONS, 2024, COURTESY THE ARTIST. PHOTOGRAPHY BY EVA HERZOG

RACHEL JONES: GATED CANYONS

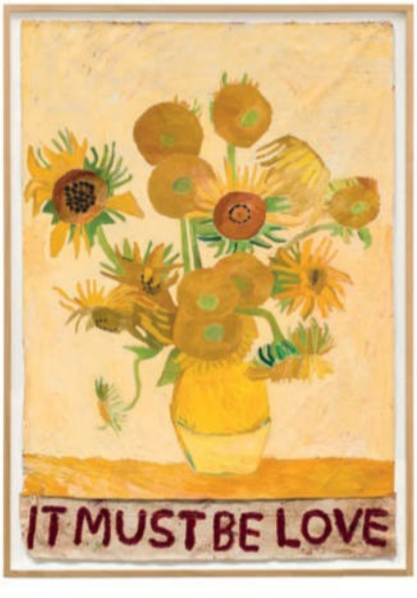
Until 19 October 2025

Known for her vibrant use of colour and un-stretched canvases, Rachel Jones explores themes of self, Blackness and emotional intensity through layered abstract and figurative motifs in this display. The exhibition features a new series inspired by a 17th-century Flemish painting, blending bold marks and tender pastel tones to evoke spaces that are both enclosed and expansive. The show is a powerful dialogue between history and contemporary expression. ***Dulwich Picture Gallery, Gallery Road, London SE21 7AD, UK. dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk***

CEDRIC MORRIS: ARTIST, PLANTSMAN & TRAVELLER

Until 12 October 2025

The first major presentation of Cedric Morris' work in the North of England, this landmark exhibition features over 20 significant loans from Tate, the National Portrait Gallery and private collections. The show explores Morris' vivid still lifes, portraits and travel paintings alongside his deep horticultural passion. Highlights include *Iris Seedlings* (1943), a portrait by Lucian Freud, and works by Morris' lifelong partner Arthur Lett-Haines. This is a rare chance to discover one of British art's most original 20th-century voices. ***Granary Gallery, Dewar's Lane, Berwick-upon-Tweed, TD15 1ES, UK. maltingsberwick.co.uk***



SOPHIE BARBER, IT MUST BE LOVE, 2025, OIL ON CANVAS. COURTESY ALISON JACQUES © SOPHIE BARBER

SOPHIE BARBER: MACKEREL SKY, MACKEREL SKY, NEVER LONG WET, NEVER LONG DRY

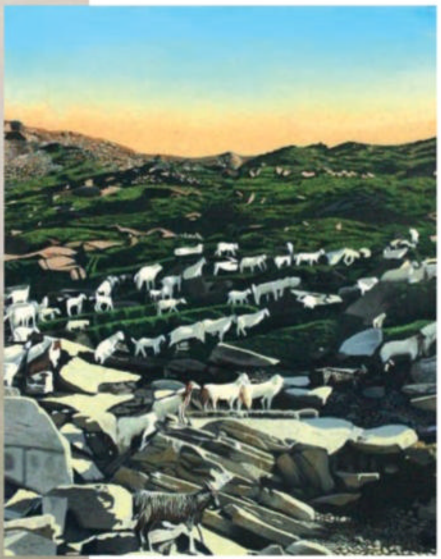
27 September 2025 to 15 March 2026

This solo exhibition is Sophie Barber's first in her hometown. Combining playful humour, folklore and surrealism, Barber presents intimate three-dimensional 'cushion' canvases alongside large-scale paintings. Inspired by the Sussex coast's landscapes and skies, her work experiments with scale, materiality and cultural references, engaging with themes of place and memory. The show features new commissions and recent acclaimed pieces. ***Hastings Contemporary, Rock-a-Nore Road, Hastings, TN34 3DW, UK. hastingscontemporary.org***

WIN Online art courses

A total prize fund of £1,200 is up for grabs – split between three lucky winners. Courtesy of **LONDON ART COLLEGE**

BARBARA SIMON


BENJAMIN MAGESH

This month, we've teamed up with London Art College to offer three readers the chance to win a £400 voucher each towards one of their online art courses. London Art College specialises in flexible, distance learning for all levels, from beginners to more experienced artists. Students can choose from a wide range of subjects, including drawing and painting, illustration, digital art and art history. Courses are designed to be completed at your own pace, with guidance and feedback from experienced tutors.

Options include technical courses in watercolour or acrylic painting, illustration modules focused on character design and storyboarding, and digital art lessons using modern software. There are also art history courses that explore key movements and artists, helping to add depth to your practice.

All courses are completed online, making them accessible wherever you are. You'll also be part of a supportive learning environment, with direct tutor feedback as you progress.
londonartcollege.co.uk

LUCY O'DONNELL

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This month's spotlight on a British Art Club member

We present...

BEATRICE CLOAKE

This artist paints daily at 78, drawing on a lifetime of bold colour, personal grit and a deep love of light

Growing up around her father's studio in France, Beatrice Cloake was quite literally raised in a world of light and colour. Her father was a stained-glass maker who also painted and taught her from a young age. "Every day, I saw colours through glass windows," she says. "I was around 14 years old when I started helping my father choose colours for his compositions."

Though her father believed a woman's place was at home rather than in the studio, Beatrice quietly defied those expectations and kept her passion for art alive. "My father, born in 1906, had a strong view about women looking after their husbands and children." Though forbidden from attending Les Beaux-Arts, Beatrice continued painting.

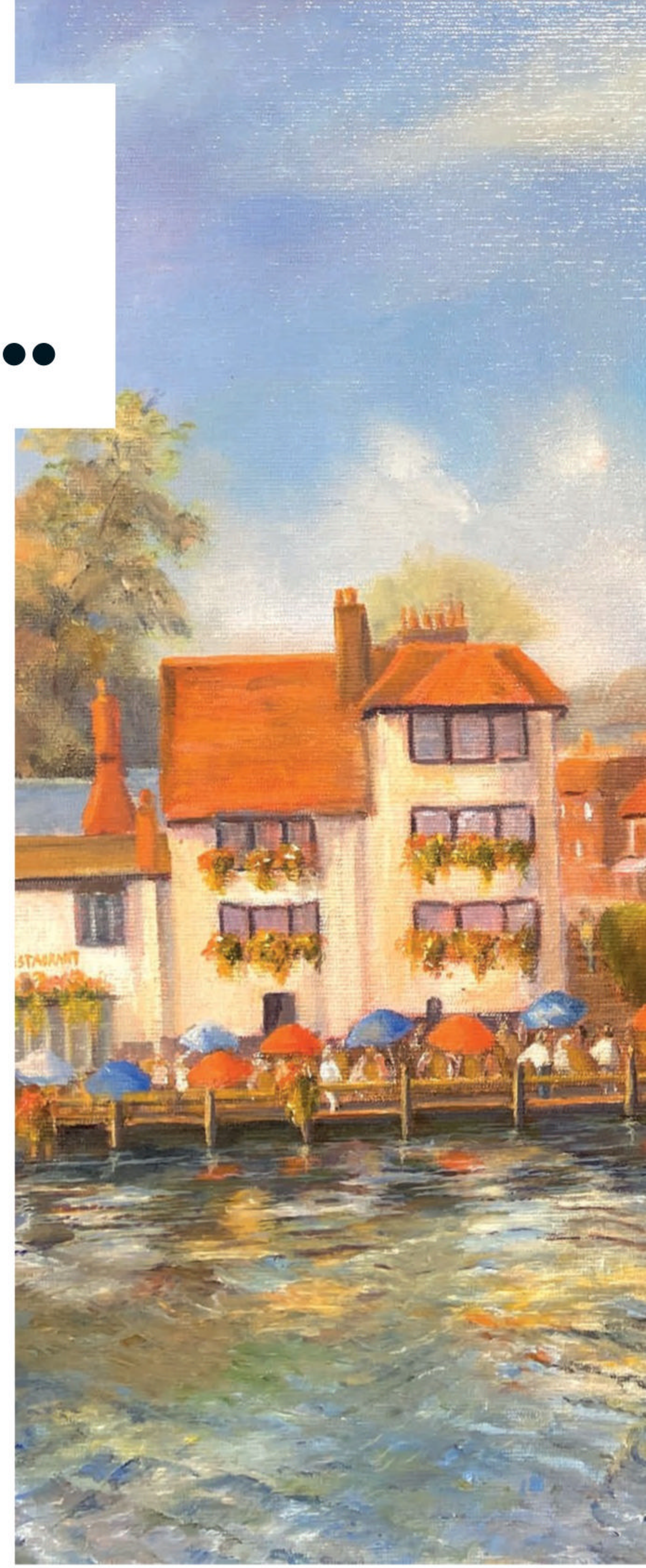
In 1970, marriage took her across the Channel to the UK; a new country, a new language and a fresh challenge for her art. "It was like cutting my ties with art as I did not speak fluent English and did not know how to get hold of art materials." Eventually, she managed to buy oil paints in the UK and returned to painting after years away from it. "My journey started and what a journey that was!"

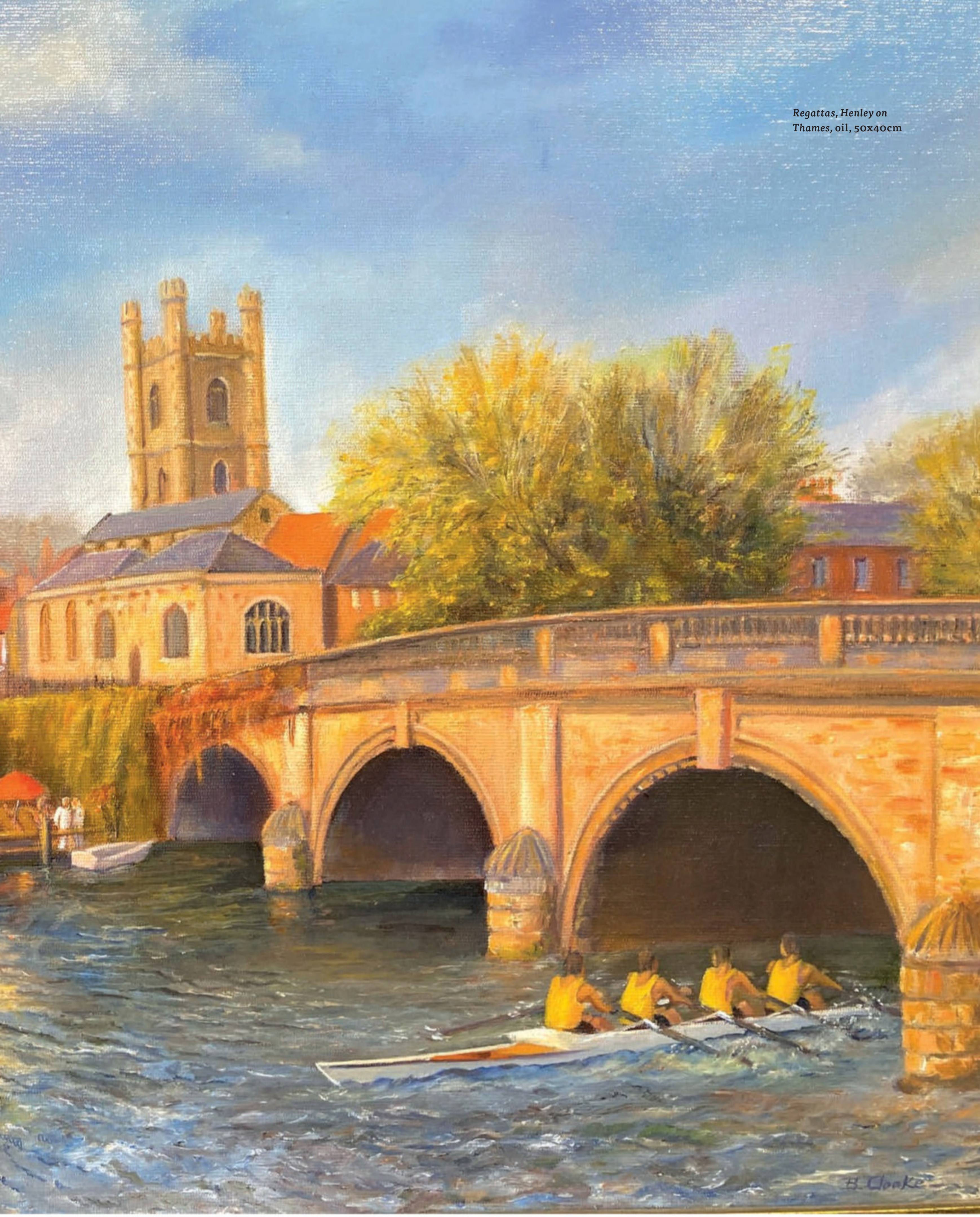
Her style evolved from French Impressionism to something all her own, but the influence of stained glass remained and she quickly built a loyal audience who could recognise her work by its distinctive style. "Most of my art is made of strong colours," she says. "The light is applied within the composition. Not using white but softening the colours."

She discovered watercolour later on, and it soon became a new favourite. "Painting with watercolour is a different sport," she laughs. "I love executing my pieces with pure watercolour; not adding gouache or any other medium to it." Her subjects are often rooted in emotional truth. "I only paint what lifts my heart or when I feel I should tell the world about things I cannot change, such as cruelty to animals, children or vandalism," she says. "It helps me to carry on with life that is not perfect."

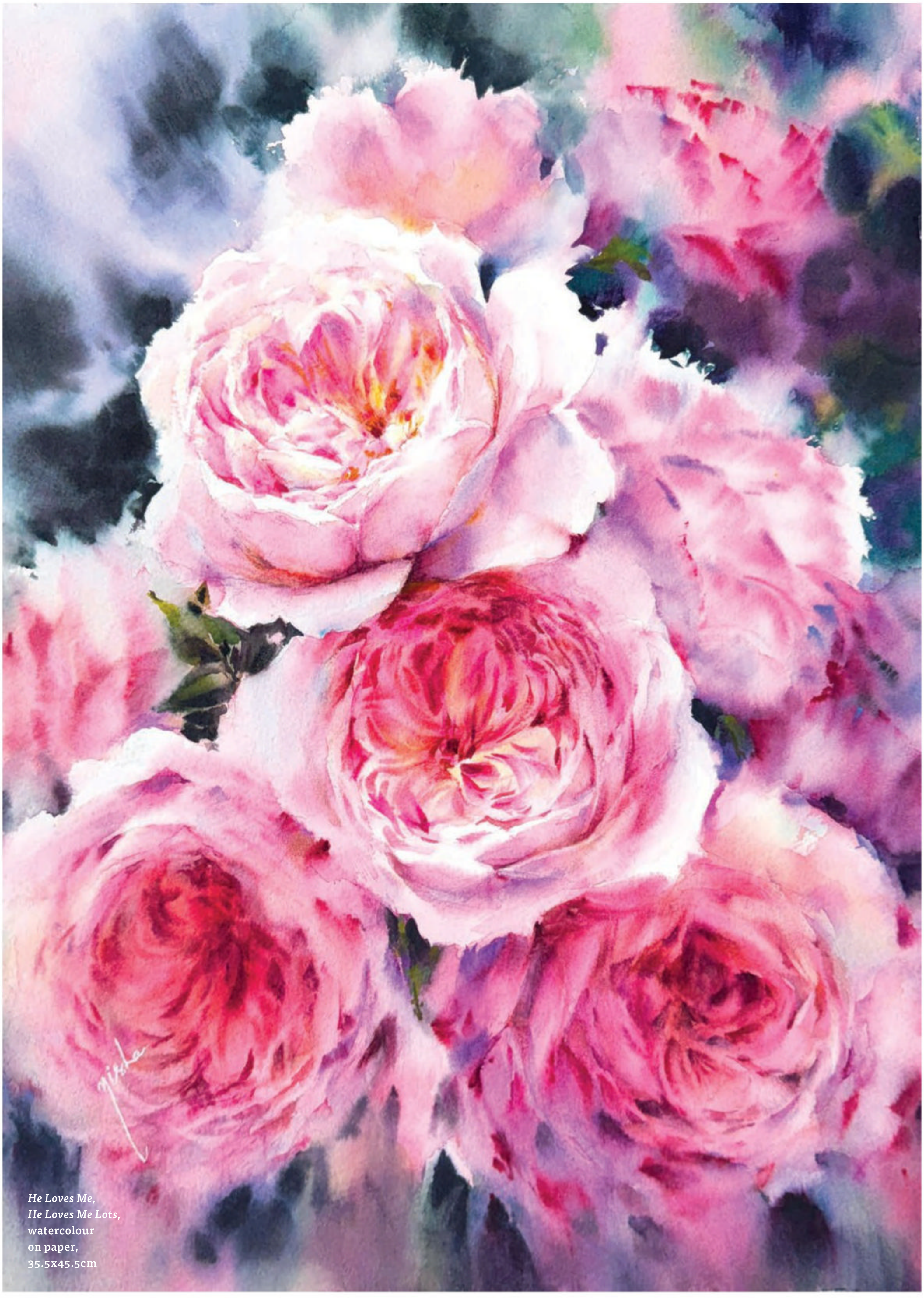
Even during her husband's long illness, she kept painting; waking early to fit it in alongside her caregiving. "I was getting up at 5 am. I bought some coloured pencils to be able to carry on with my art while being by his side." Her advice for young artists? "Do not listen to critics unless requested," she says. "At 78 years old, I have achieved the dream I had at 16: to be both a mother and an artist."

britishartclub.co.uk/profile/beatricecloake □





Regattas, Henley on Thames, oil, 50x40cm

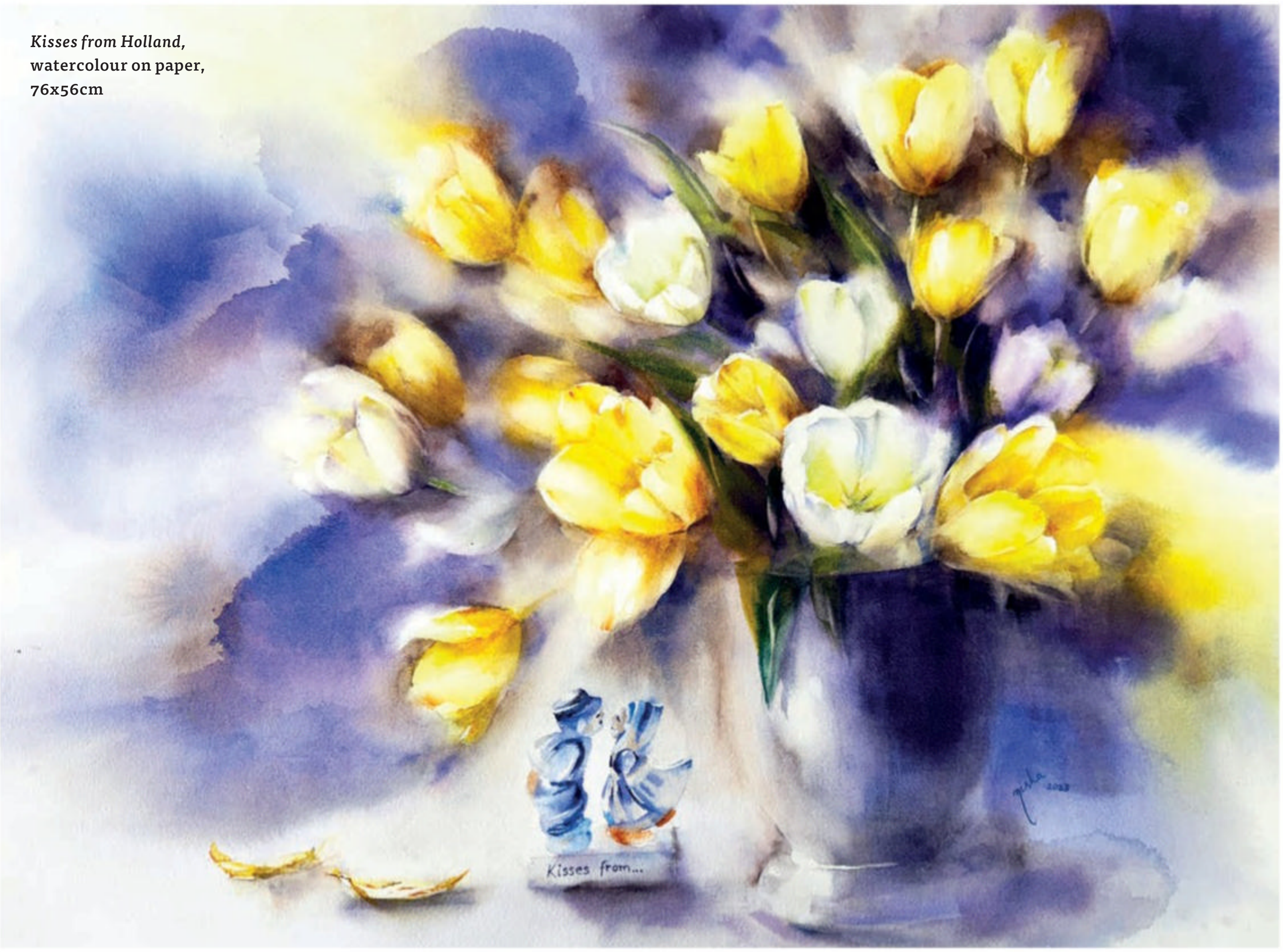


He Loves Me, He Loves Me Lots, watercolour on paper, 35.5x45.5cm

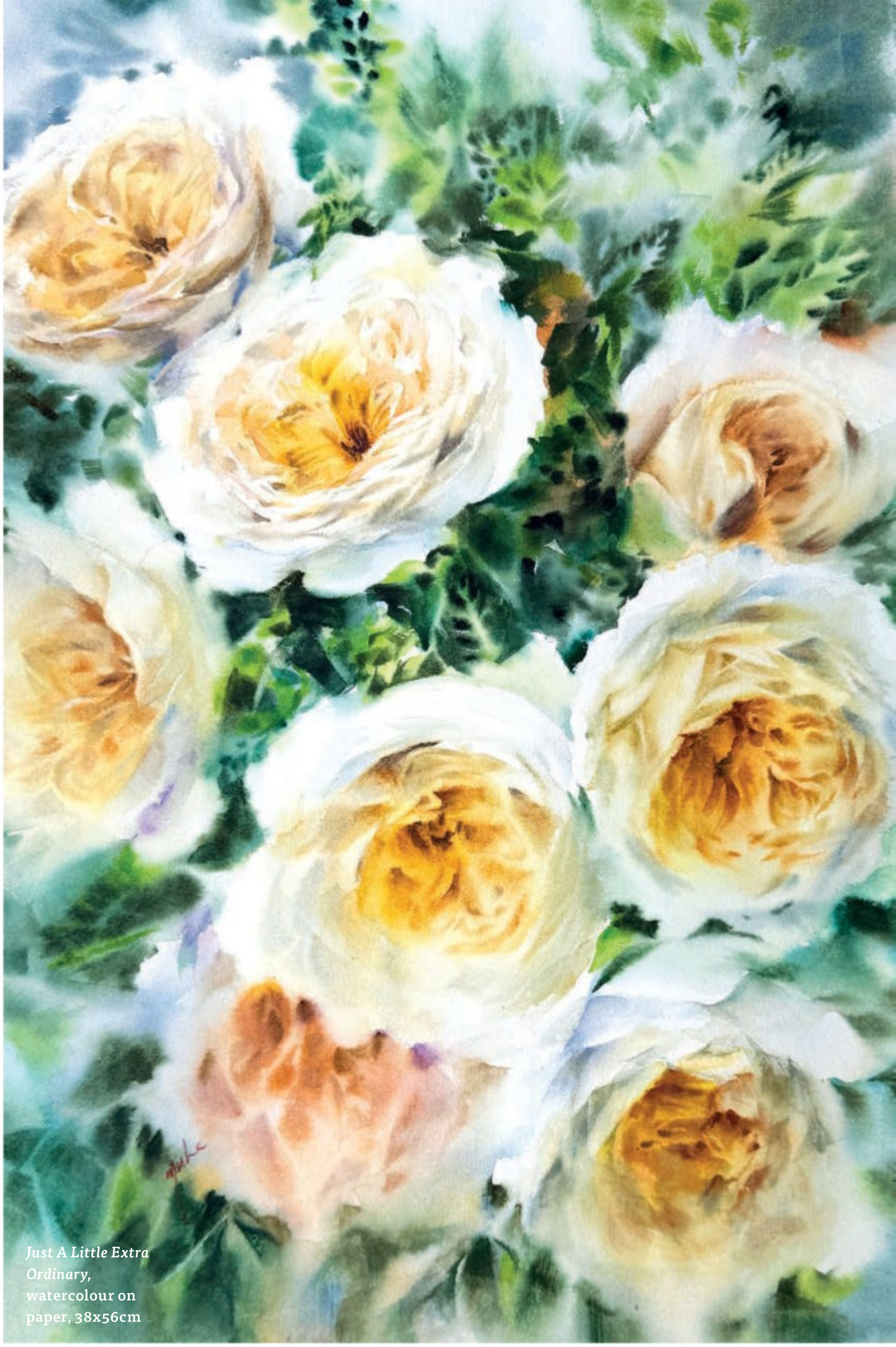
Nisha Sehjpal

This artist believes that her lack of formal training has encouraged her to be experimental. She tells *Sarah Edghill* why it isn't about following rules as an artist. Do what feels right for you ▸

Kisses from Holland, watercolour on paper, 76x56cm


Kisses from...

HOW I WORK IN THE STUDIO



Just A Little Extra Ordinary, watercolour on paper, 38x56cm

So many talented artists were put off art at an early age, and Nisha Sehjpal is a prime example; she vividly remembers a high school teacher once telling her she had no business being anywhere near paints. “That stuck with me longer than I care to admit,” she says. “It convinced me that perhaps creativity was a gift only a few were born with – and I wasn’t one of them.”

Having been dissuaded from pursuing a career in art, Nisha did an engineering degree and spent many years working in IT, which left her feeling unfulfilled and disconnected from herself. It wasn’t until 2014, during a trip to Paris, that something shifted. “I found myself inside Musée de l’Orangerie, surrounded by Monet’s *Water Lilies*,” she remembers. “Sitting there, I felt a kind of enveloping peace I hadn’t experienced in years. In that moment, I knew – this is what I wanted to feel as often as I could.”

Still, it took another five years for her to conquer self-doubt and muster the courage to pursue art seriously – not as a hobby, but as a full-time commitment. A pivotal moment in her journey was joining Jean Haines’ online art school during lockdown. “A couple of months into learning with Jean, I had this epiphany. I realised it wasn’t about being naturally gifted; it was about having the right guidance and a nurturing space to grow. Having that uninterrupted time during the pandemic really allowed me to immerse myself in the medium, explore techniques and start developing a voice of my own.”

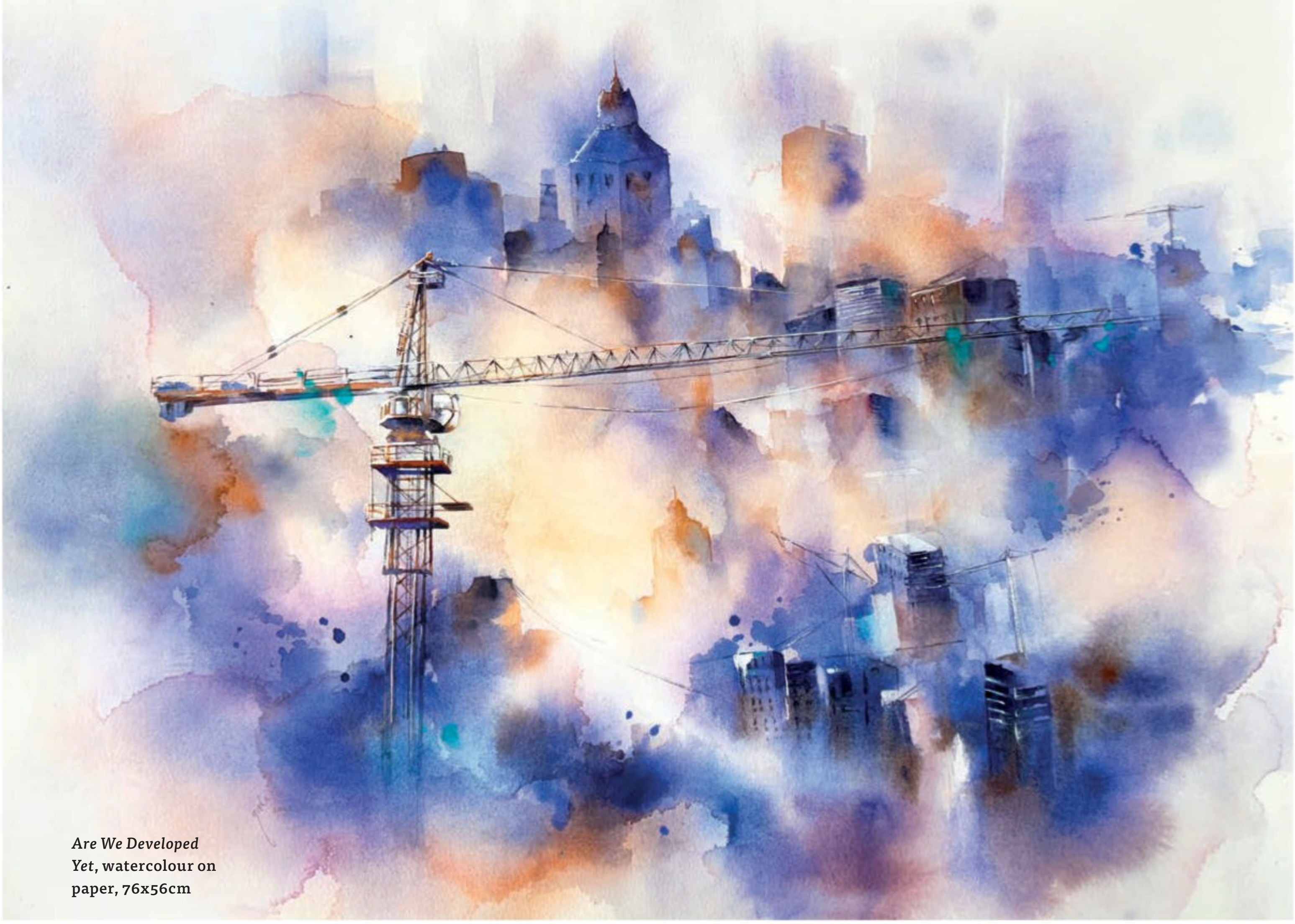
One of the biggest challenges she had to overcome was the fear of failure, especially the pressure to get things ‘right.’ As a beginner, she worried there was only one correct way to approach things, whether that was how to hold a brush or how much water to use. “But the truth is, there’s no universal formula,” she says now. “What works beautifully for one artist might not work for another. It took me a while to understand that art isn’t about following rigid rules but about exploring what feels right for you.”

Nowadays, Nisha’s varied work encompasses florals, still life, landscapes and portraits. “My compositions are rarely based on a single image; they’re more like carefully assembled puzzles. I often pull elements from multiple photos, selecting what appeals to me aesthetically. Even with a still life in front of me, I tend to make changes as I go – it’s part observation, part imagination.”

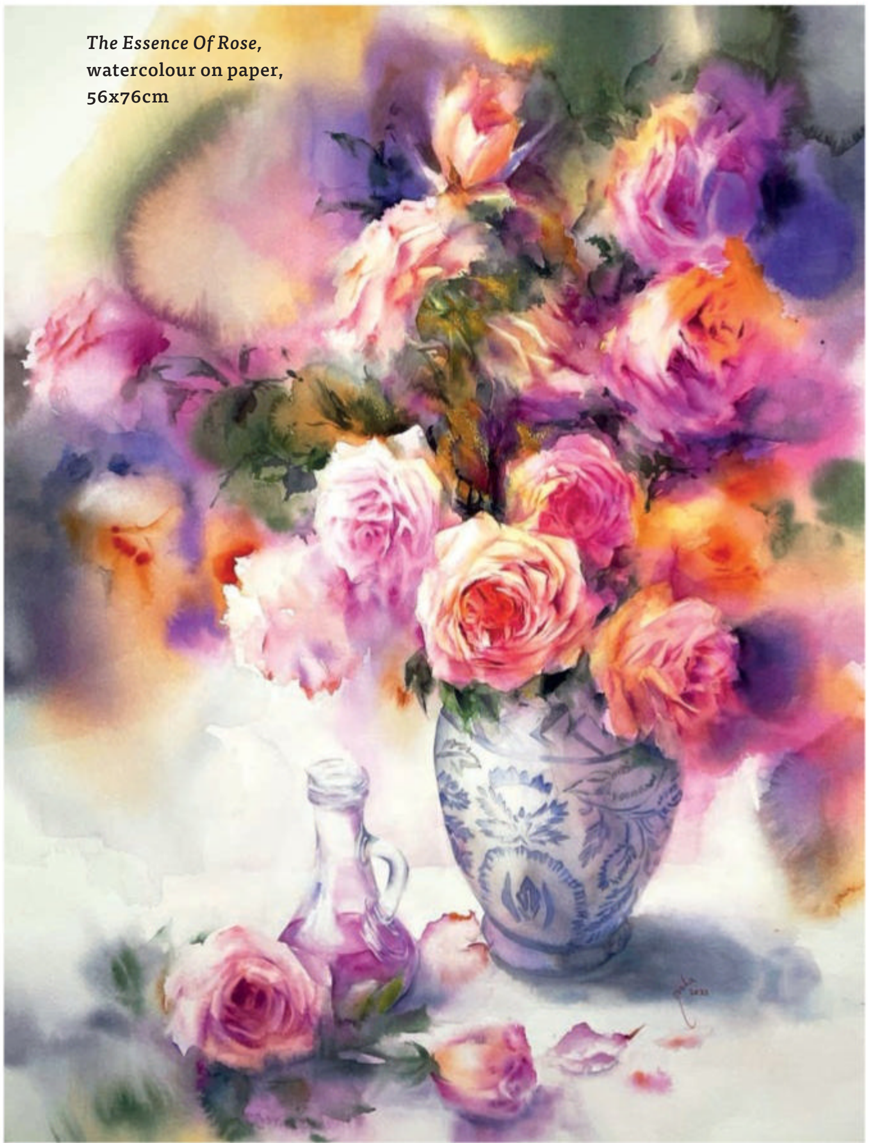
Florals are her favourite subject. “I’m especially drawn to their organic shapes – they allow for a natural blend of observation and imagination. There’s something quite ethereal about painting florals; it’s like capturing a dream just loosely tethered to reality. For me, it’s an easy marriage between what is real and what’s imagined; a space where intuition can take over and guide the brush.”

She begins each new piece of work with a rough pencil sketch to map out the main and secondary points of interest, using water-soluble graphite, which dissolves almost completely by the time the final washes are in place, leaving no visible lines. The supporting elements or background details are often added spontaneously, painted directly onto the paper without a preliminary sketch. “It’s a conscious choice to loosen the edges from the start,” she says. “For me, it’s less about colouring within defined borders and more about letting go of control and allowing the artwork to evolve fluidly. I love working wet-on-wet because it allows colours to run into each other naturally. I often let elements of the foreground blend into the background and vice versa – intentionally blurring the boundaries.”

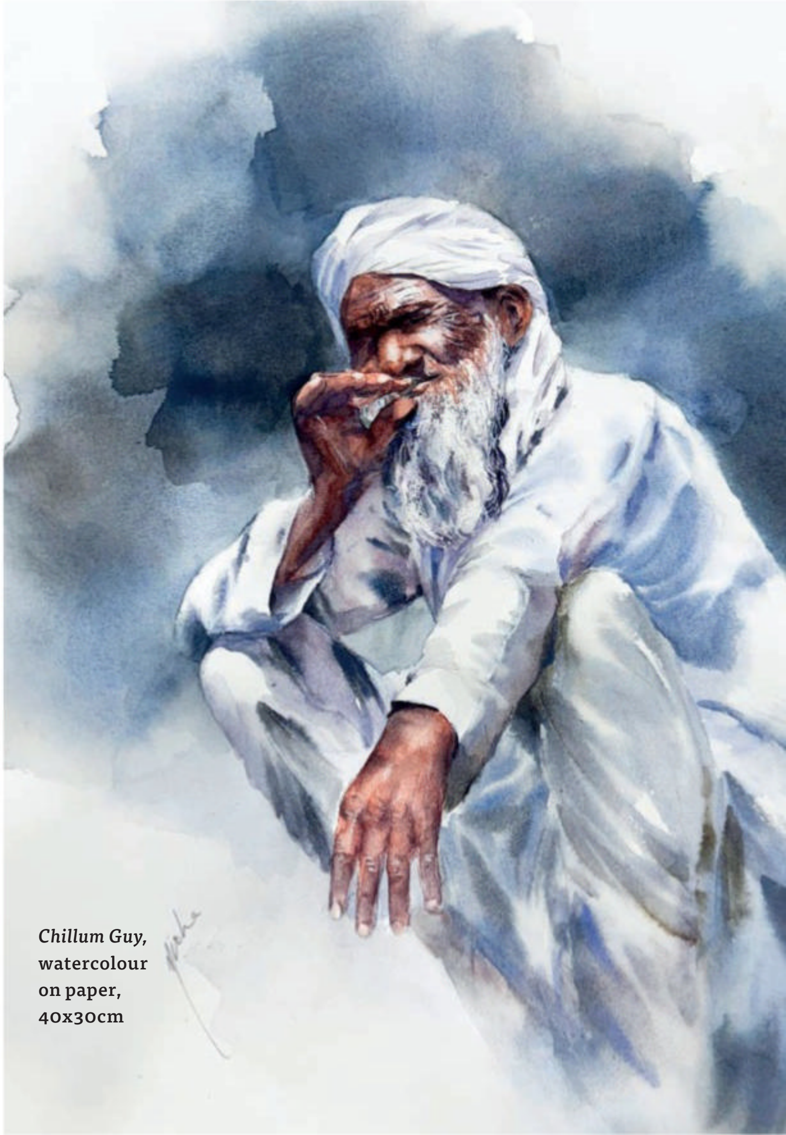
Although she experiments with other mediums, what she loves most about ▶



Are We Developed Yet, watercolour on paper, 76x56cm



The Essence Of Rose, watercolour on paper, 56x76cm



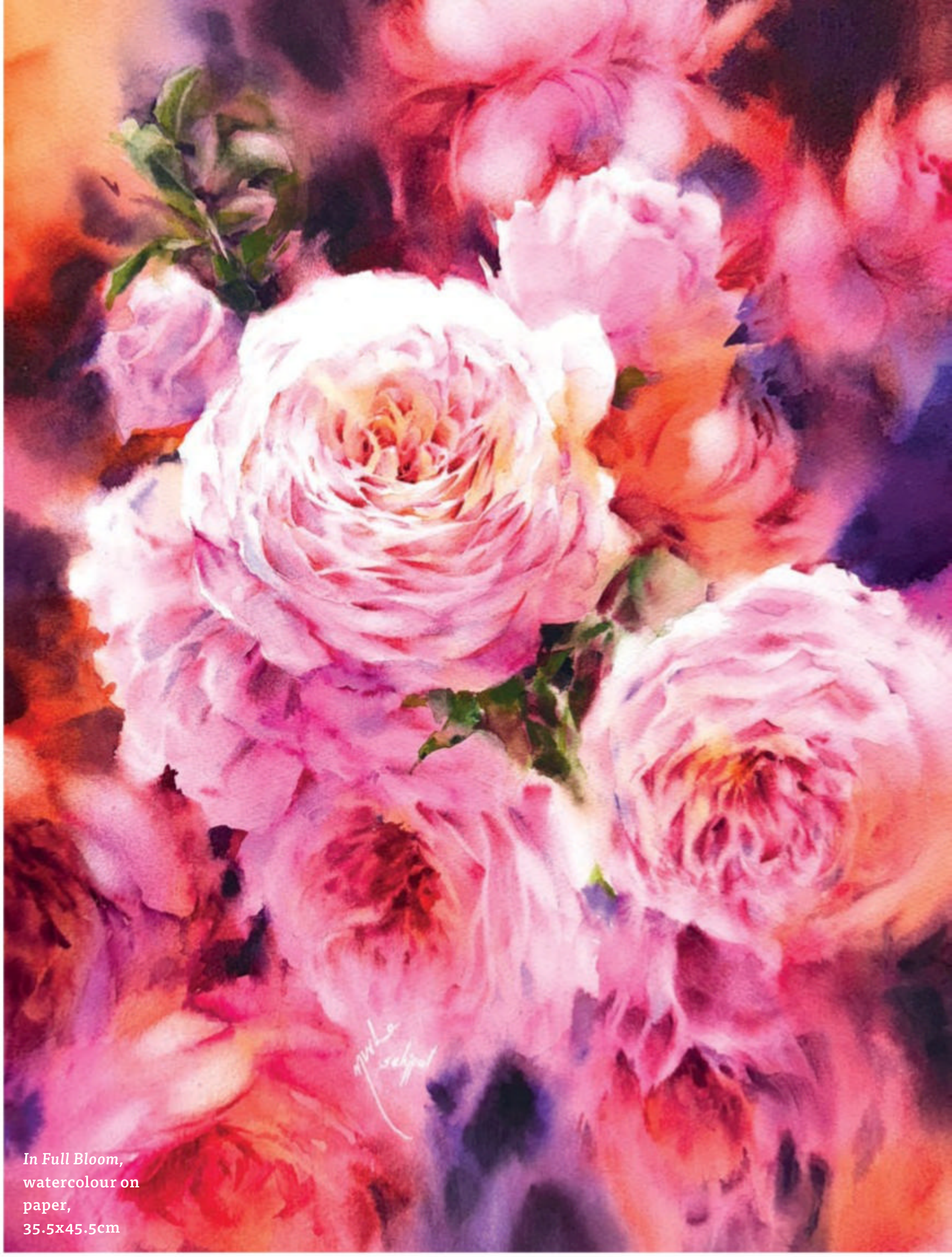
Chillum Guy, watercolour on paper, 40x30cm watercolour is its unpredictability. "It's never just me painting alone; the medium itself participates in the process. I often describe it as playing chess with water and pigment. I make a move, and then I wait and watch as the watercolour responds. Unlike traditional chess, though, we're not opponents; we're partners, and as long as the paper remains wet, the game is afoot. I do lean heavily on the wet-on-wet technique: it's something I embraced early in my practice, and it quickly became a trusted ally. It allows me to move away from photorealism and toward something more expressive – looser, more atmospheric."

Nisha describes her studio as her 'sanctum sanctorum.' It is a quiet, light-filled room where creativity is unleashed, at the heart of which is a north-facing window which offers gentle, consistent light which is perfect for watercolours. "I work between a large drafting table and a trusty studio easel, depending on the size and nature of the piece," she says. "I always have music on while painting, which stops me from overthinking, so the process doesn't feel too contrived.

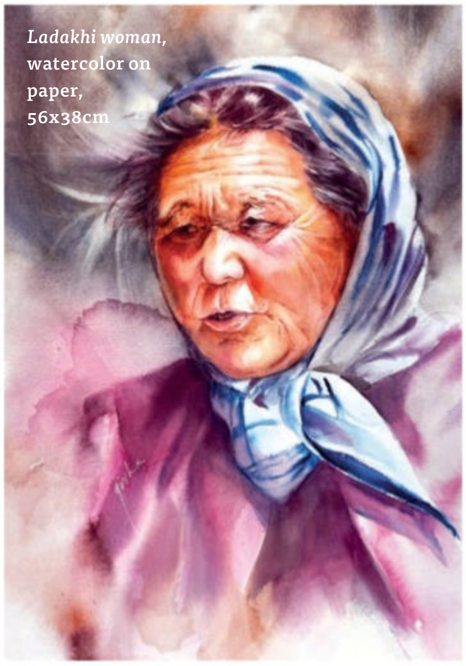
"The space is kept deliberately undisturbed. The studio gets cleaned once every few days, of course, but it only stays tidy for about five minutes before turning into a creative mess again, and absolutely no one is allowed to step in. At first glance, it might look like a hurricane has just passed through – piles of papers, brushes tucked in teacups, and collections of seemingly unrelated objects. But to me, it's a system of controlled chaos. I can tell you exactly where everything is, even if it looks like a mess. It's a running joke that I'm superstitious about it – I genuinely believe someone else walking in might shift the energy and scare the muse away!"

"I often describe watercolour as playing chess with water and pigment"

While she does try to step into the studio every day, Nisha has learnt to be realistic about the rhythm of life. "Some days flow easily; others are tangled up in errands and headspace. I've come to see routine more as an anchor than a rule. When I'm in the right frame of mind, I tend to dive in with bold washes and focus on the key areas of the painting – like starting with a confident opening line in a conversation. But on days when my inner critic is louder than usual, I ease into it. I begin with the quieter parts of the painting – the supporting cast, so to speak. And quite often, once those pieces fall into place, my mood shifts and the rest follows with more clarity."



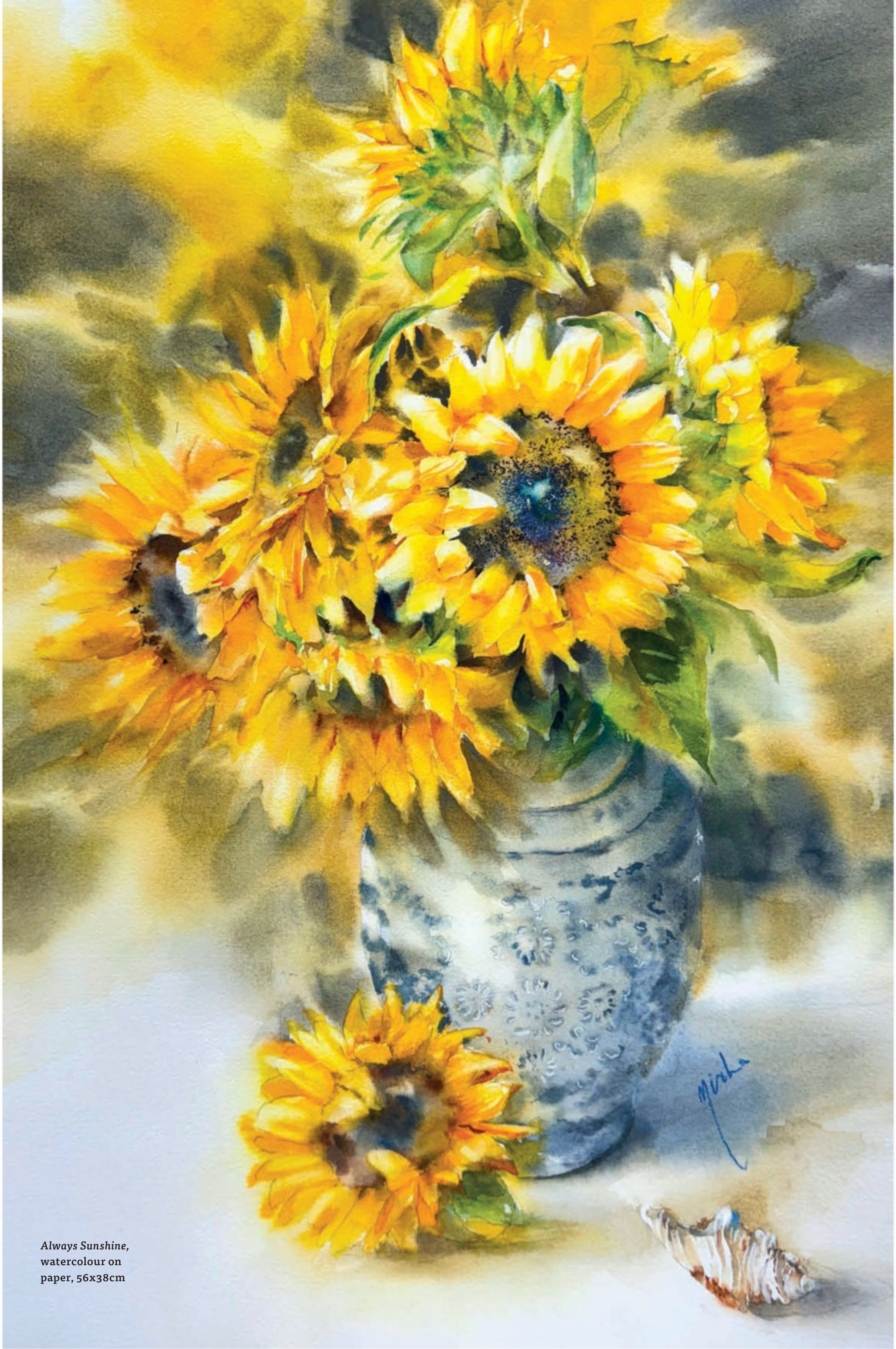
In Full Bloom, watercolour on paper, 35.5x45.5cm



Ladakhi woman, watercolor on paper, 56x38cm

When she worked in IT, clocking in and out was the norm, so now she values the freedom she has as an artist. "I no longer follow a rigid schedule. Instead, I paint when I feel most connected – sometimes early in the morning, sometimes late at night. That flexibility is something I cherish. My goal has always been to have fun while painting. If that joy somehow seeps into the paper and speaks to others, that's a beautiful and welcome bonus. Over time, I've become more relaxed and playful with my approach. I've stopped worrying about rules or results and just try to chase the next high."

nishasehjpal.com ◻

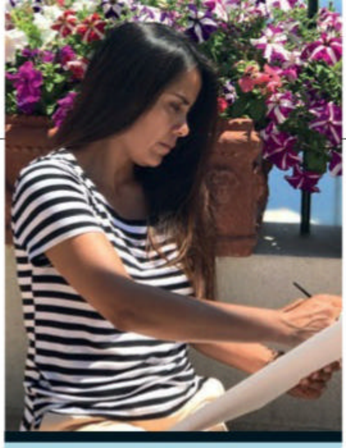


Always Sunshine, watercolour on paper, 56x38cm

HOW I MAKE IT WORK

Paola Luther

This artist transformed her passion for landscapes into a thriving career through consistency and community



PAOLA'S TIPS ON BECOMING A FULL-TIME ARTIST

1

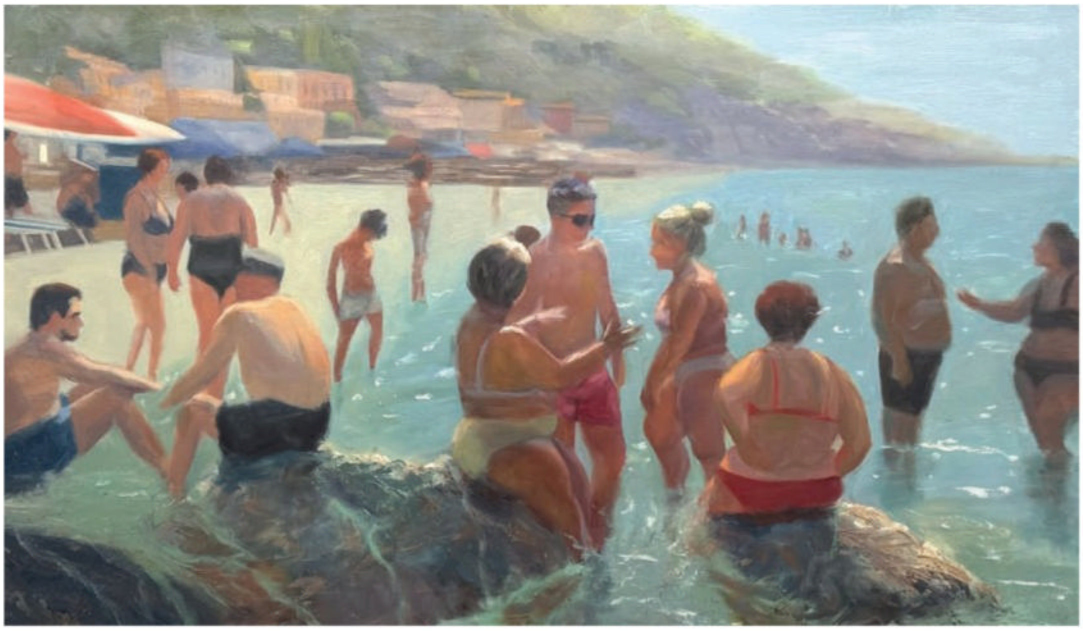
Create consistently
Treat your art like the serious work it is, even if it doesn't feel perfect yet.

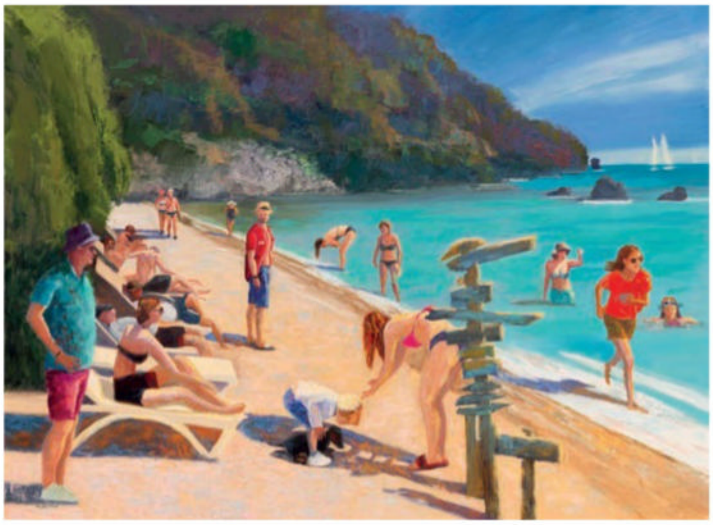
2

Don't wait to be discovered
Build your own platform, share your work regularly and connect with others.

3

Diversify: find multiple ways your art can support you
This is so you're not reliant on just one income source.





TOP LEFT *Shoreline Stories*, oil, 131x77cm **LEFT** *So many signs*, oil, 121x91cm

I grew up in a creative environment where making things with our hands was encouraged. That early encouragement gave me the confidence to pursue art seriously. I also remember being deeply moved by illustrated books and museum visits, which left an imprint that I still carry into my paintings today.

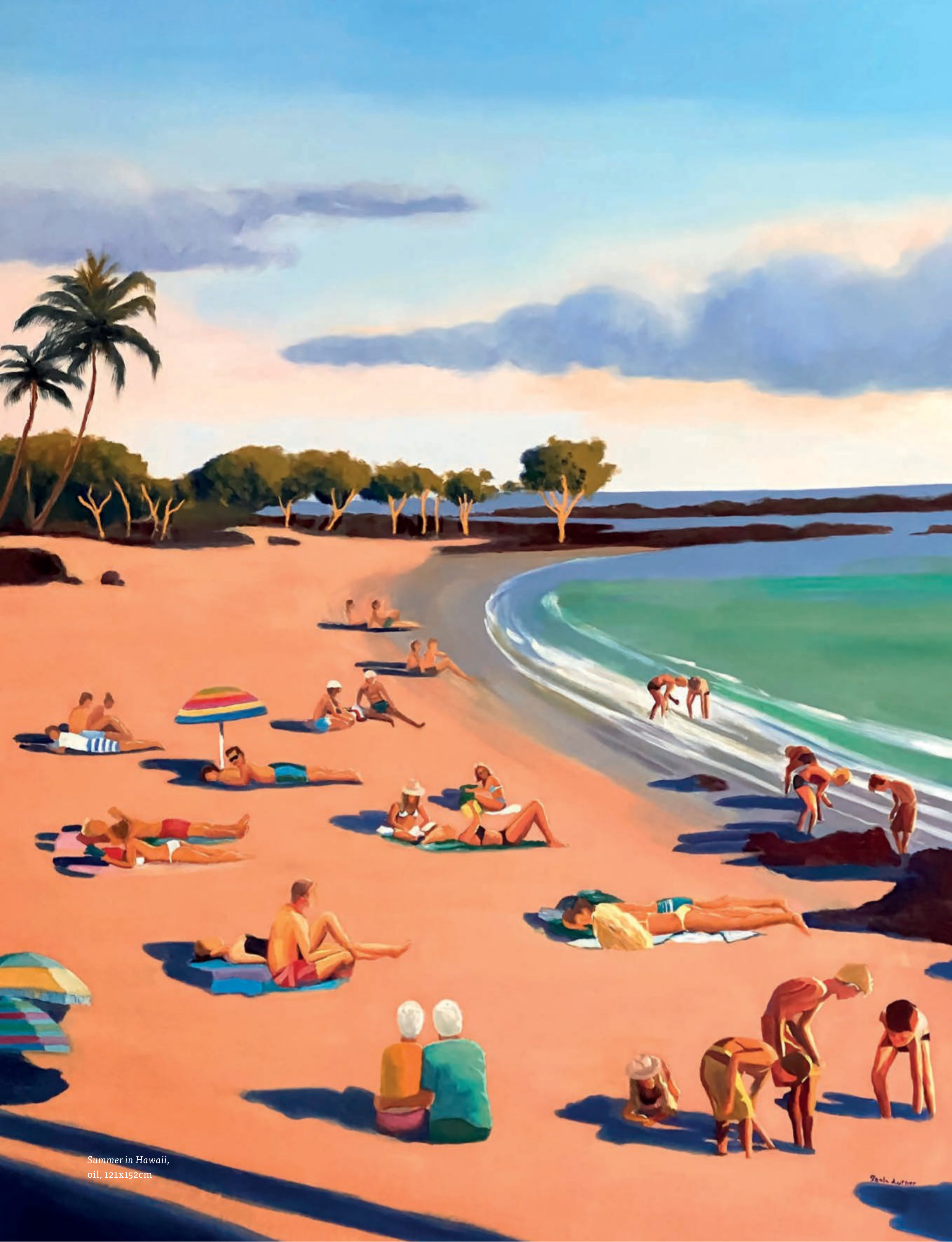
I've always been drawn to landscapes because of the emotional resonance they carry. There's something timeless about the horizon or the way light transforms a scene. My early landscapes were more representational, but over the years, my style has evolved to balance realism with a touch of whimsy and emotional depth.

I approach each composition with the intention of leading the viewer's eye through the painting gently. Light is everything in my work and texture is not just tactile but emotional.

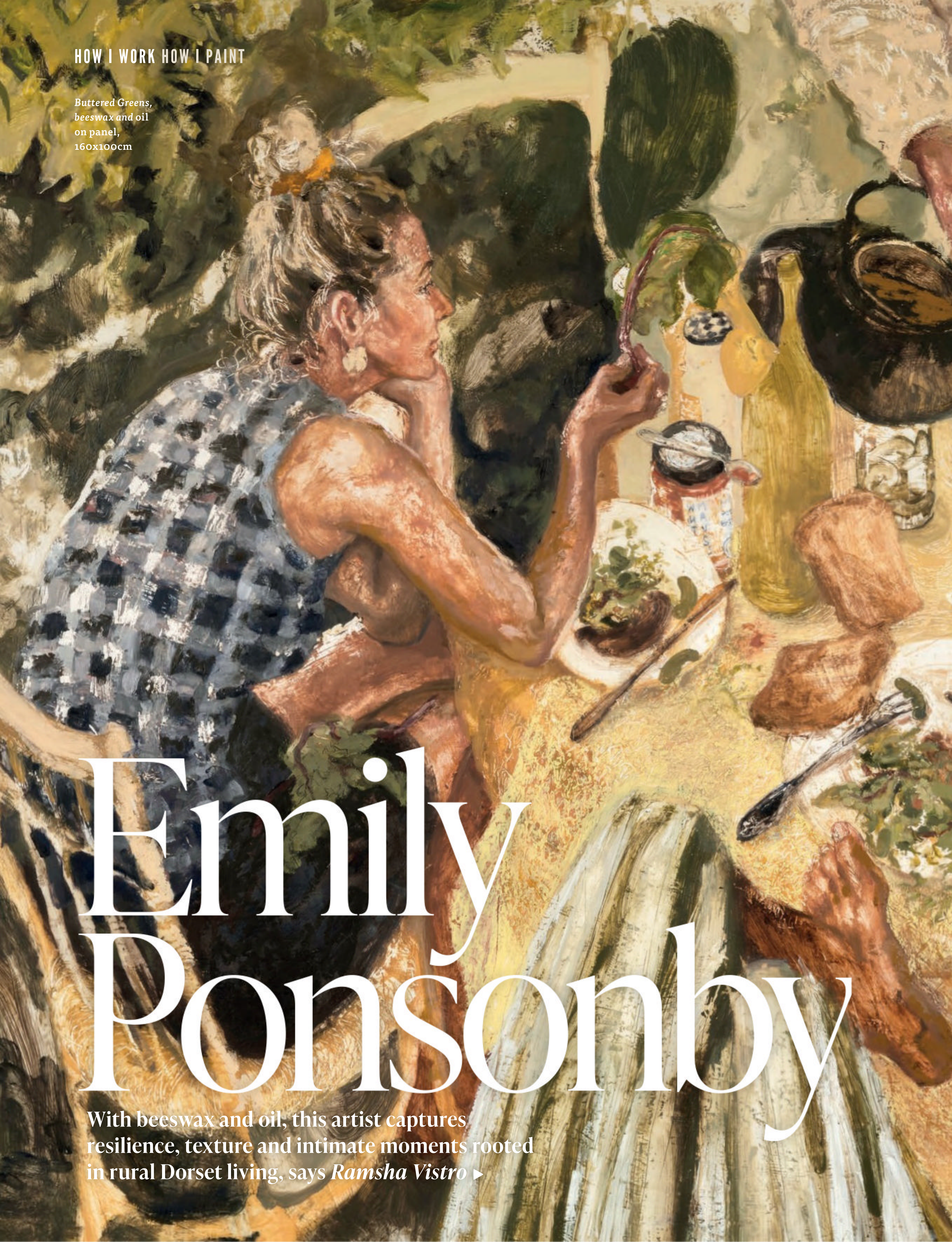
While my path wasn't strictly academic, I've studied art consistently over the years, through mentorships workshops, and self-guided learning. My teaching experience has also played a big role in refining my techniques. It not only helped me develop a deeper understanding of painting but also allowed me to connect with a community. Showing at art festivals around the U.S. gave me direct feedback from collectors and art lovers. But what's been truly pivotal is consistency; painting regularly, showing up for my audience and treating my practice like the profession it is.

Diversification has been essential. I sell original paintings and fine art prints, offer private and group lessons, run therapeutic art sessions, and license some of my images. I've also embraced social media and use it to collaborate with brands, curate emerging artists, and share educational content. Each stream supports the others, creating a sustainable eco-system for my art.

My online presence has been a powerful tool too; not only for visibility but for community-building. It's allowed me to reach a global audience and connect with artists and collectors I never would have met otherwise. It's helped me stay accountable and inspired. ***paolaluther.com*** ☐



Summer in Hawaii,
oil, 121x152cm



Buttered Greens, beeswax and oil on panel, 160x100cm

Emily Ponsonby

With beeswax and oil, this artist captures resilience, texture and intimate moments rooted in rural Dorset living, says *Ramsha Vistro* ▸

ELLIOT SHEPPARD

Emily Ponsonby's paintings strip away everything but the essentials: skin, scars and the stories they carry. Using beeswax and oil, she sculpts figures that feel weathered and alive, sometimes faceless; like fragments of memory caught mid-shift.

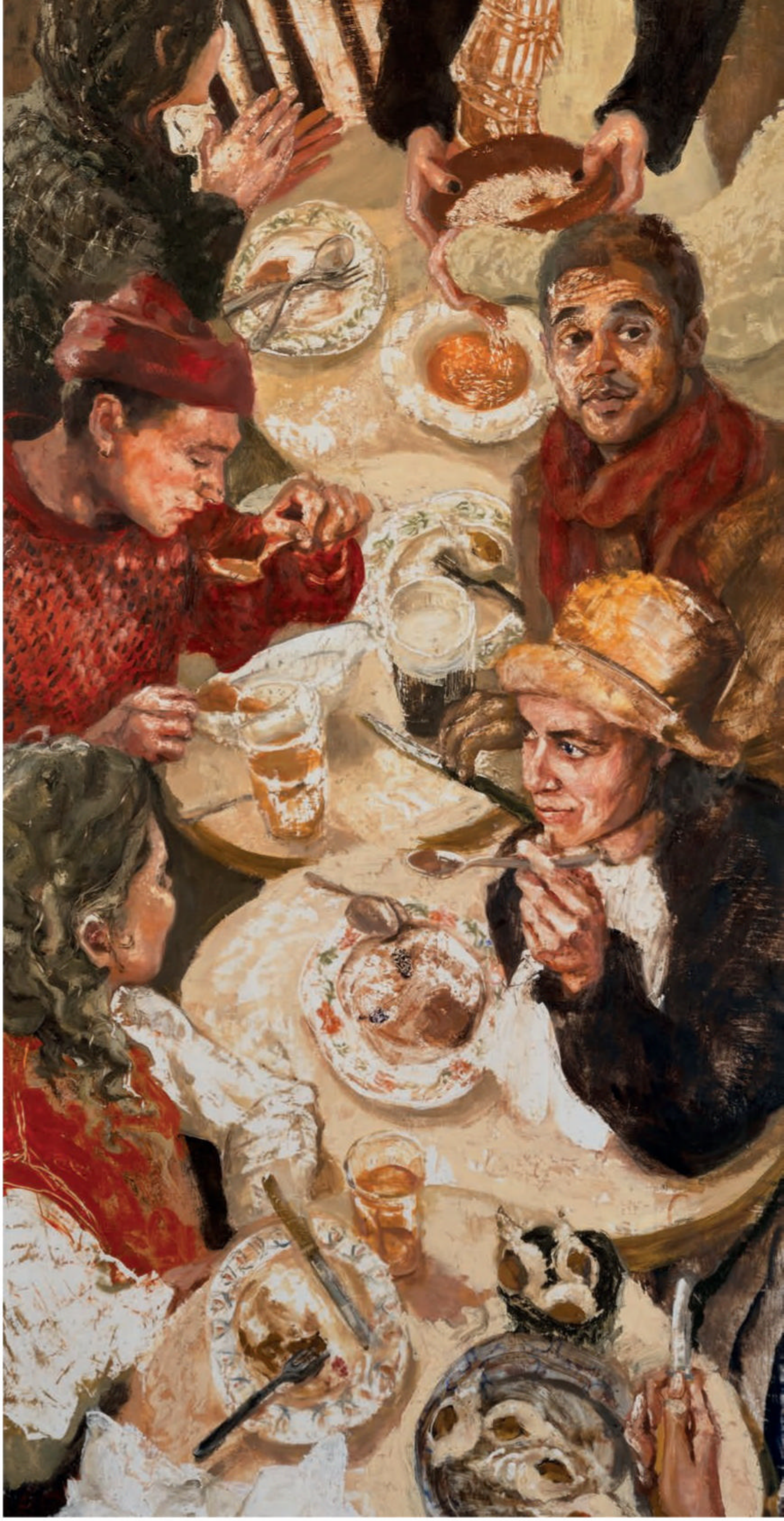
Trained in London and Edinburgh, she builds on the Ancient Egyptian encaustic technique that is shaped by a deep connection to beeswax inspired by her beekeeper father, but with a modern edge. Her Dorset studio – which is set among farm animals – provides a fitting backdrop for work that's raw, honest and arresting.

Emily's art has been shown in solo exhibitions at J/M Gallery and group shows at Rhodes Contemporary in London. Notably, her painting *Chewing The Cud* was selected for the Herbert Smith Freehills Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery; a significant milestone in her career.

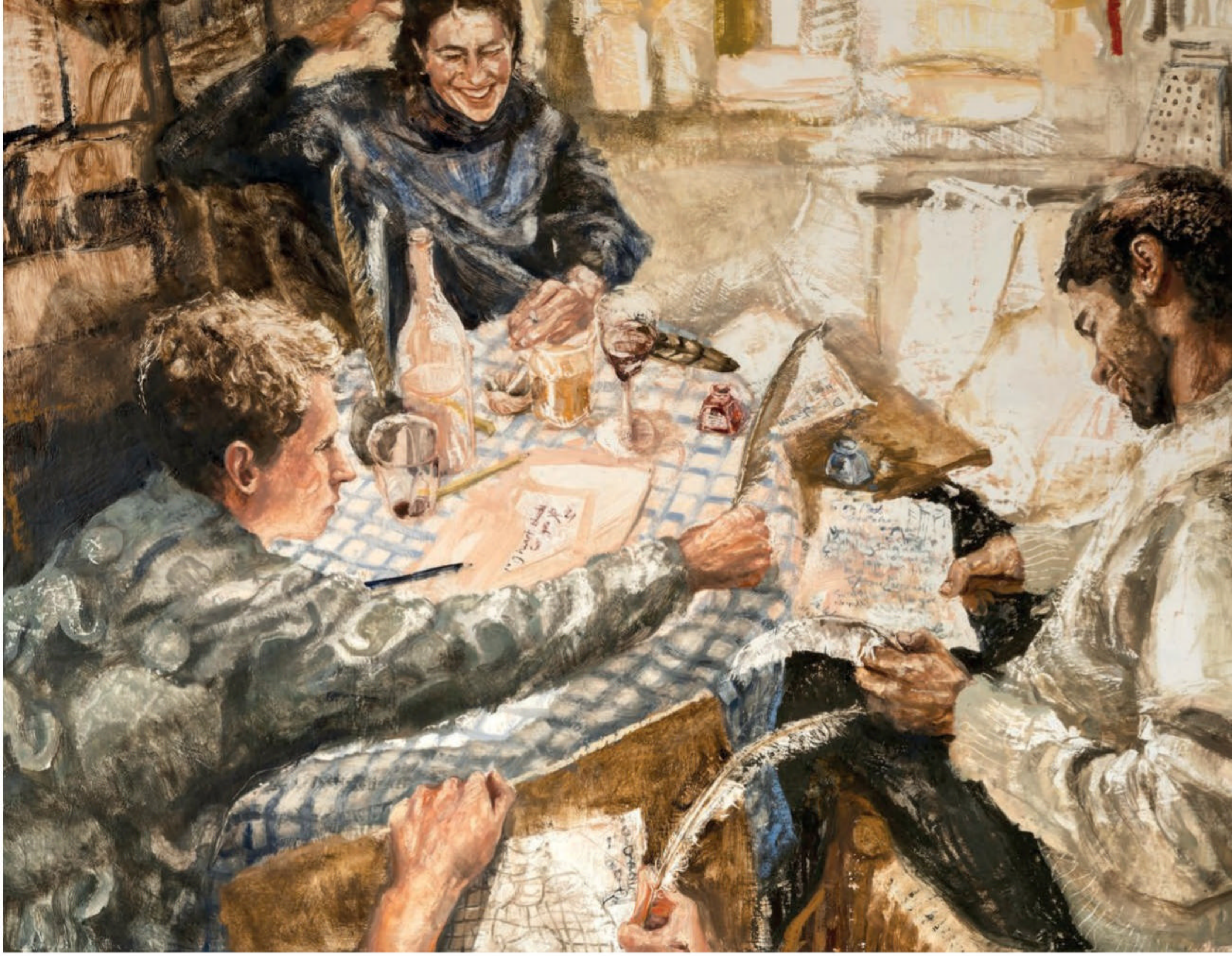
Through her unique process and evocative subject matter, the artist invites viewers to engage with the human form in its most authentic state: unadorned, unfiltered and undeniably human.
emilyponsonby.com

I always had my hands in the soil creating something out of nothing.
Like many children, we loved making dens, excited by the endless possibilities of what could be made out of sand, branches or a poor farmer's neatly stacked hay bales. I've always been very tactile. My parents aren't artists, but they are wizards with words, wildly green-fingered and have brought us up to be innately curious about people, places, pastimes and our approach to life.

I moved to rural Dorset in the middle of Storm Eunice, a few years ago.
I accidentally landed in a village of painters, printmakers, sculptors, carpenters and writers. I live the reality of my paintings. I sketch the people with whom I share every day. The paintings are plucked from the hedgerows we walk, the beans that have just ripened and the conversations we've shared about love, life and the land. Like the waves rolling in a few miles away, the process of creation here is wonderfully circular and cyclical. A friend will photograph me in the studio sitting in front of a canvas which bears that photographer's face with a cigarette balancing in his mouth and gently podding a broad bean. I place clues of what lights them up, maybe painting a scrap of paper by the arm of the sitter with their recent project scrawled across it.



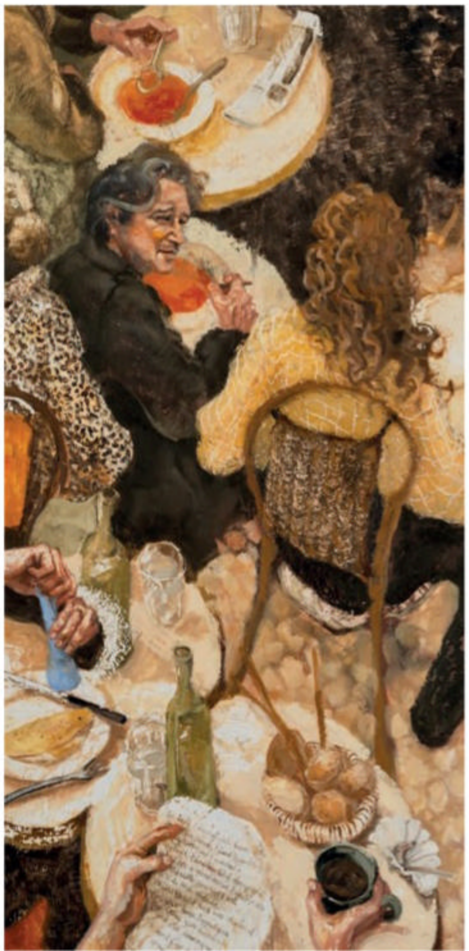
ELLIOT SHEPPARD



ELLIOT SHEPPARD

My studio is part of a farmyard.
It's full of cows, farm cats whilst swooping swallows come the summer months. I'm so lucky to share a yard with people to say good morning to, borrow milk from and get a second opinion on a stubborn painting. I would go mad if I didn't have them. In the mornings, I walk the hills and normally get to the studio around 10 am. I will move paint around, plot and sketch, and plan all day; but the real work starts happening between 5 pm and 1 am. The yard is quiet, apart from the mice, and I can flow fuelled on hot chocolate until the early hours.

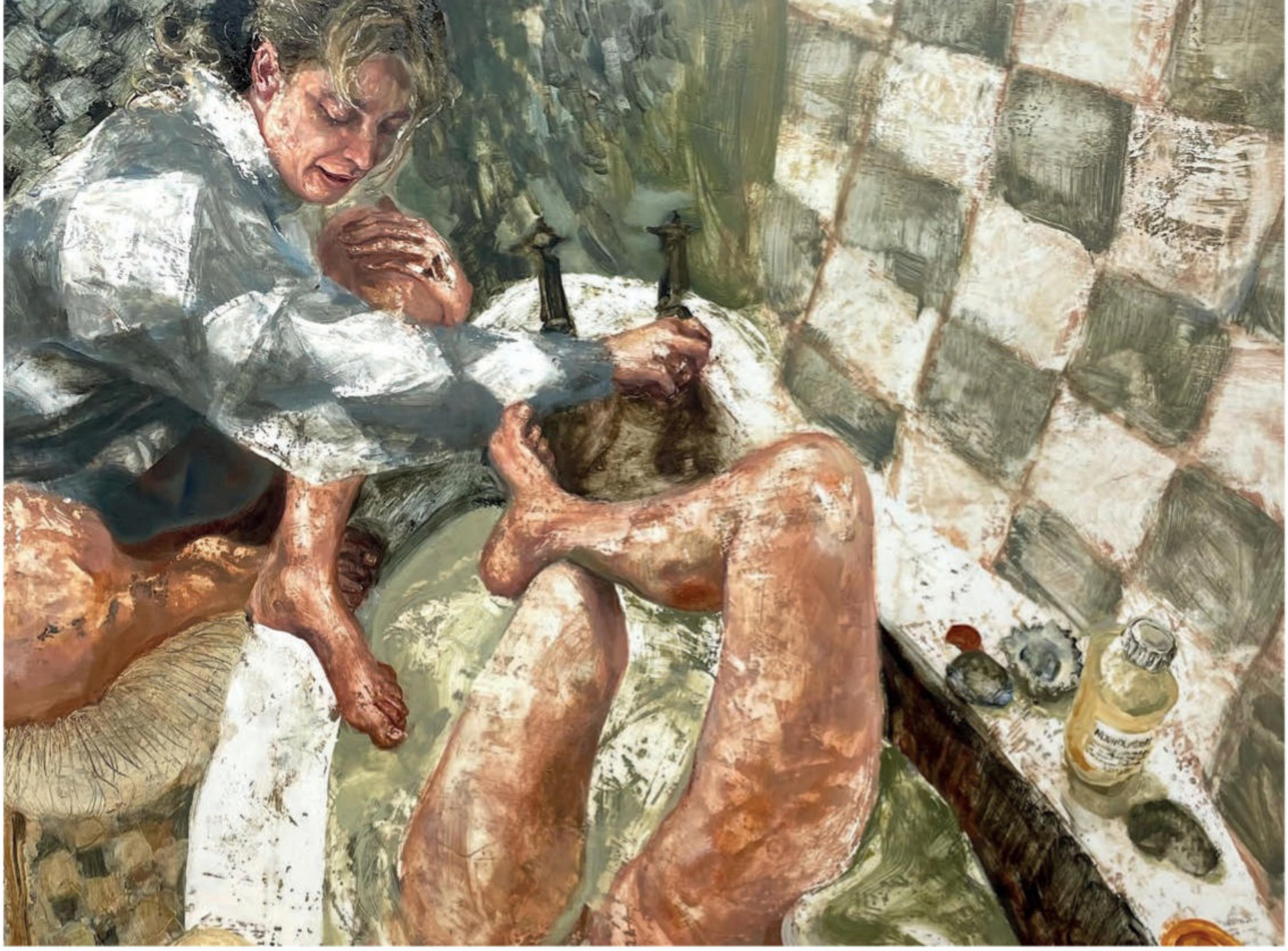
Nudes are timeless.
Strangers, family and friends have been amazingly generous in allowing me to paint them nude. I make sure to move the studio into an environment where nudity feels most natural before starting a sketch, so the mind and body are as comfortable and relaxed as possible. I have a good understanding of how it feels to be on the other side of the canvas as I began life modelling whilst living in South Africa and now, I race towards every opportunity. Rarely do I feel so strong, confident and curious about my body's resilience than when modelling for a room of squinting artists and nodding arms.



ELLIOT SHEPPARD

OPPOSITE *Port In A Storm*, beeswax and oil on canvas, 120x60cm **ABOVE** *My Heart Bleeds For You*, beeswax and oil on canvas, 140x110cm **LEFT** *Searching For Bonnard*, beeswax and oil on canvas, 120x60cm

I'm super enthusiastic about textures and changing states of matter.
So, it makes sense that I work with a material as malleable as wax. This was influenced by my beekeeper Dad, learning to be gentle and respect the bees whilst ogling at their honeycombs' perfect hexagonal architecture. A connection between the viewer, the work and me is deepened further through the trace of my touch: scraping, carving and reworking the beeswax until the narrative is drawn to the surface. Working the wax helps the paintings to pulse with a dynamic tension, a constant push and pull between bold gestures and subtle strokes, tightening and loosening, and playing simultaneously with both ▶



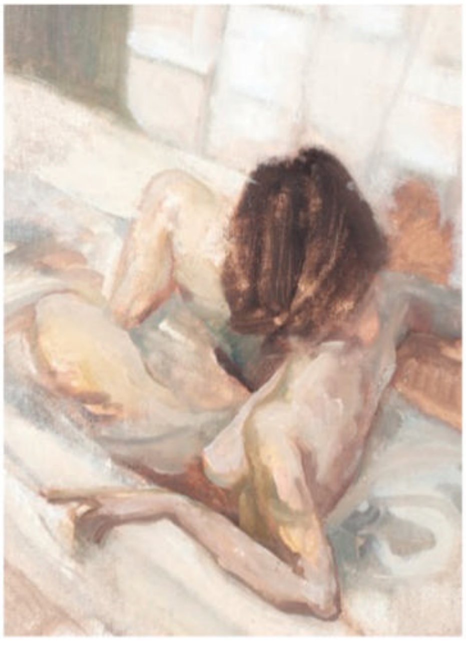
ELLIOT SHEPPARD

perfection and imperfection. I haven't ever painted bees but on multiple occasions, honeybees have appeared at my exhibitions to inspect and crawl over the paintings.

Over the last 14 years, I have developed an encaustic technique.
This involves melting and brushing beeswax and pigment into wooden panels before sculpting them back into the layers and then drawing the image to the surface. Many works have ended up in the wood burner during the developmental stages. For a while, I used 'golden syrup' coloured beeswax where the bees had collected pollen from spindly stalked wildflowers. This was problematic when creating subtle skin tones, so I changed to a lighter creamier coloured beeswax, the product of bees feeding on stockier heather and lavender which gives the paintings a lovely warm glow. The majority of whites in the painting's surface are peering through from the beeswax layer below.

I often wake in the middle of the night to scribble down painting corrections.
Whether they come from a dream, I don't know, but the need to record them is definitely strong enough to jolt me awake. I work on the whole exhibition at once, so this means flowing between 15 or so paintings at a time, hopefully creating a gentle unity.

> **" My paintings are not just what the eye sees; they're what the heart feels"**



ELLIOT SHEPPARD

TOP *Warm Cockles And Green Soup*, beeswax and oil on canvas, 81x91cm **ABOVE** *The Bather*, oil on canvas, 30x22cm

I have met some wildly talented artists through Instagram.
For that reason, it's brilliant. But building a business on Instagram is like building on a floodplain because you never know when it's going to be underwater and taken away from you. Therefore, I am careful not to depend on it too much and instead, I always try and nurture relationships with fellow artists as well as clients elsewhere on sturdier grounds.

I want the viewer to feel part of the story.
As if they themselves could pull out a chair and take a seat at the table alongside warm, curious minds and big embraces. My paintings are not just what the eye sees; they're what the heart feels – the invisible warmth between people as they share bread, time and stories. Every day I make something from nothing, from piles of oil, wood and wax. It doesn't mean it's good, but it means that each day is a sandpit of possibilities, playfulness and the unexpected. I take everything I'm feeling to the wall, processing and embedding it into the layers before it's set free to catch someone's eye and soothe them as it has soothed me.

Emily Ponsonby's upcoming exhibition will be held at Gillian Jason Gallery in London from 11 September to 19 October 2025. ◻

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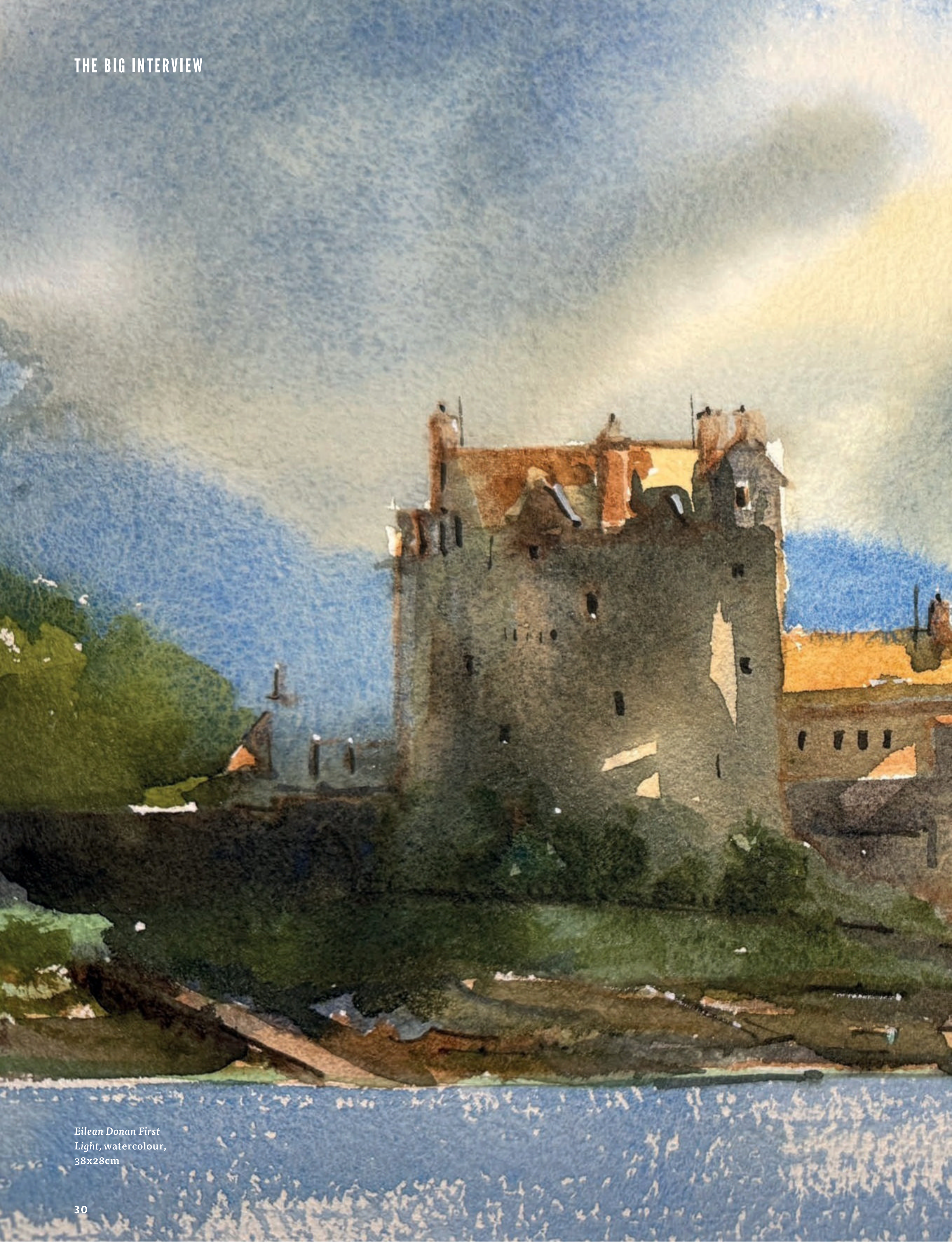
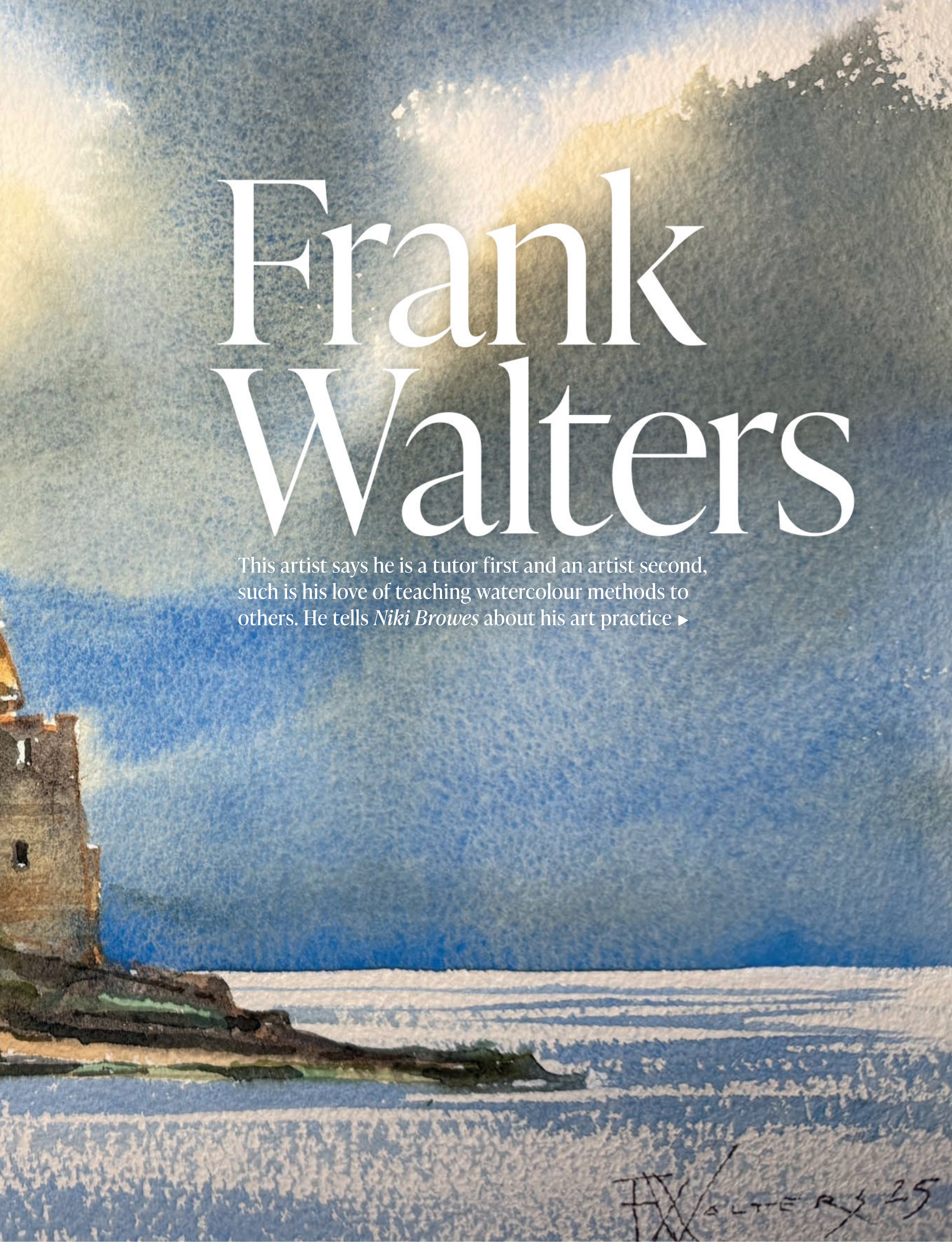
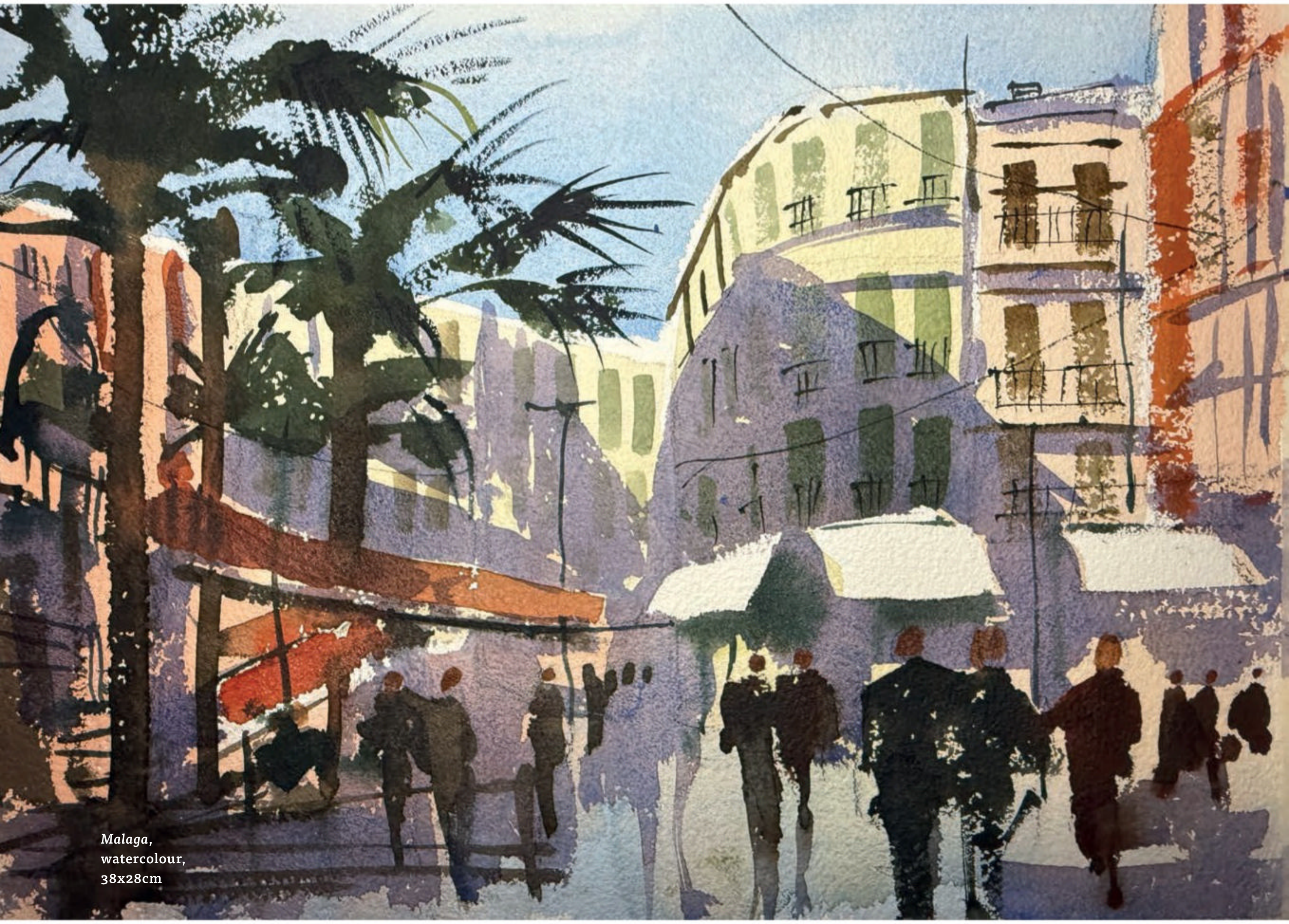


Eilean Donan First Light, watercolour, 38x28cm

Frank Walters

This artist says he is a tutor first and an artist second, such is his love of teaching watercolour methods to others. He tells *Niki Browes* about his art practice ▸





Malaga, watercolour, 38x28cm

A professional career as an Art Director helped Frank Walters set up a thriving watercolour brand several years ago. With his own YouTube channel, @frankwatercolour, he also teaches at Kew Art Studio, hold classes online and takes groups away on art retreats to the likes of the Cote d'Azur and Tuscany. For him, it's all about presenting his art and classes as compelling communication, which sounds like he delivers if his nearly 10,000 followers on YouTube are anything to go by. Over to him. ***frankwatercolours.com***

My family wasn't particularly artistic, but they embraced art and encouraged me at a very early age to follow my love of painting.

I can still remember looking through books of paintings by the impressionists and being totally fascinated by colour. I was always a very inventive child which led me to a long career in advertising as an art director. It wasn't until the late nineties that I started painting again as a bit of a hobby and I began to study the noble art of watercolour. It's certainly not the easiest of mediums but highly rewarding when it comes together.

Around 2018, I decided to teach watercolour in my spare time and became a tutor in the medium at Kew Art Studio in West London.

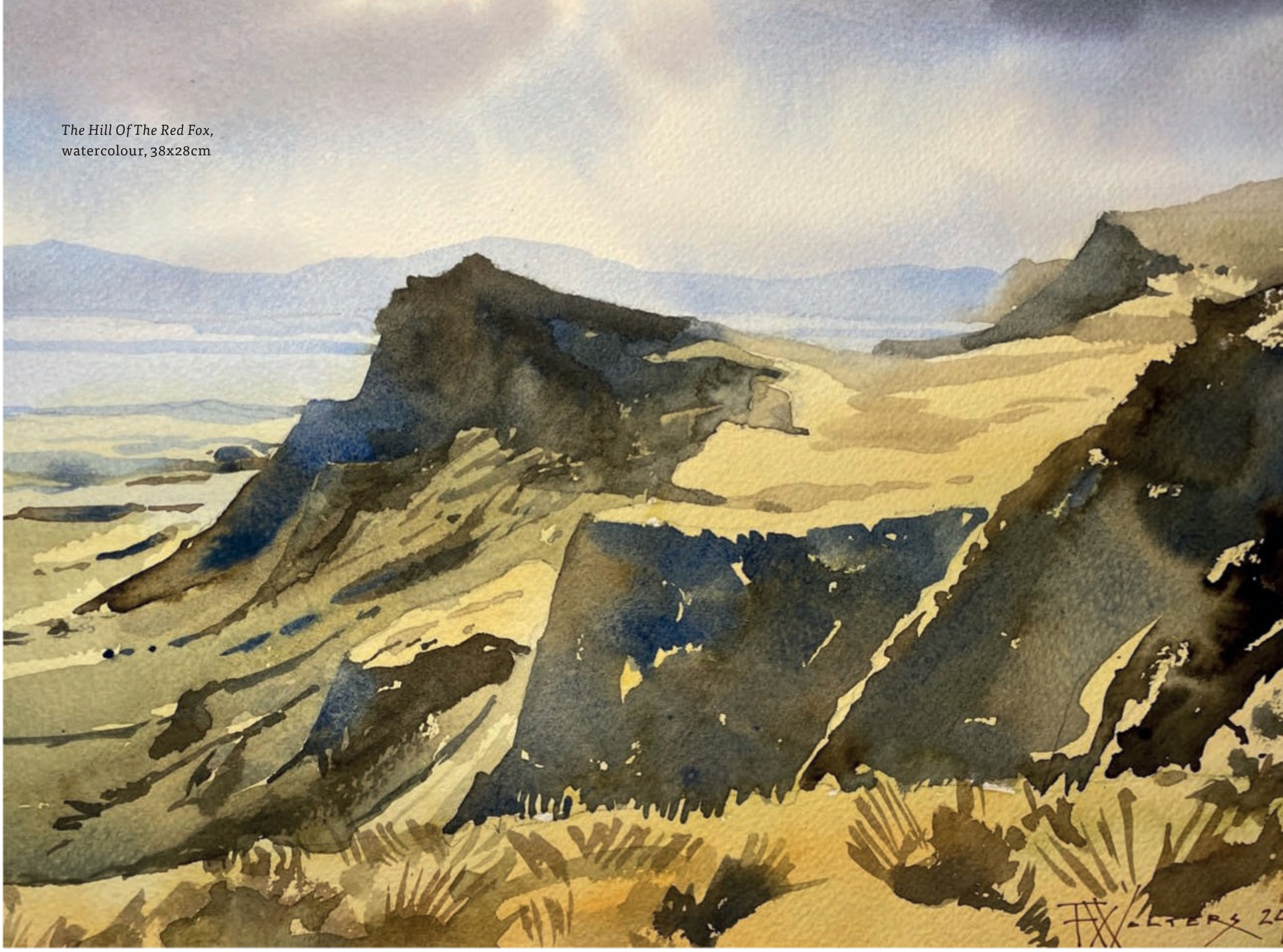
In early 2020, COVID arrived, a strange time when we were all discombobulated and stuck in doors. Fortunately, I had my own Zoom account for my day job, and my on-line Frank Watercolours teaching odyssey was born.

I started in advertising at a time when visual ideas and concepts were still drawn by hand.

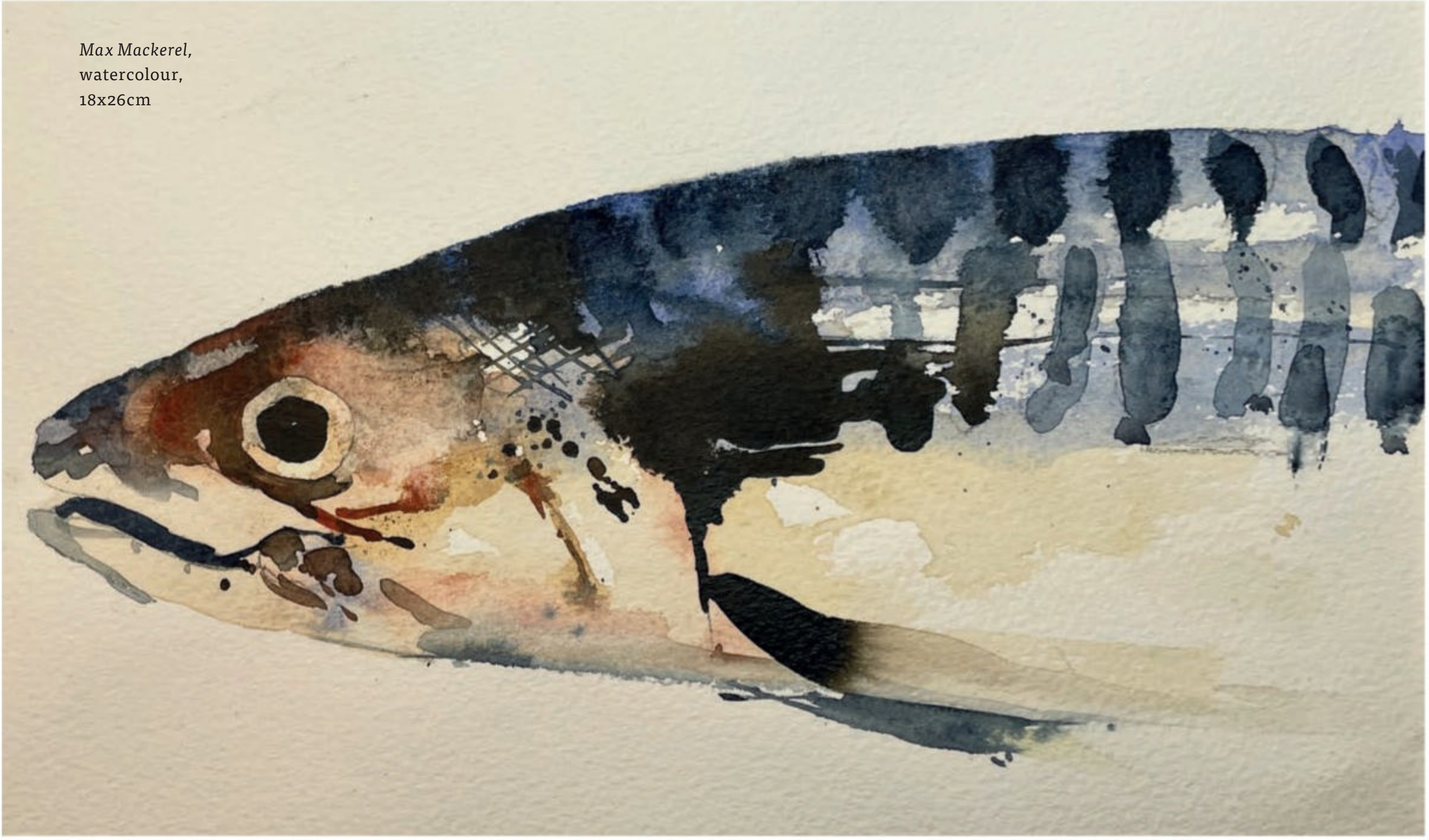
Later as Creative Director at the agency Paling Walters, I continued to embrace art in all its forms as the basis of compelling communication. Beautifully crafted adverts delivered a bundle of creative awards. I continue to work in advertising today as Creative Director and Chairman of Nmblr, whose mission it is to improve access to healthcare. Needless to say, my advertising experience has certainly contributed to the promotion of my watercolour brand and the growth of my YouTube Channel.

I started painting in oil when I was around 11 years old.

Later in life, I got into the tricky medium of watercolour, mainly because I found it light and nimble when painting on vacation. Over the years, I've been greatly influenced by watercolour landscape artists like Wesson, Chamberlain and Yardley. I always tell my students to adopt a good role ▶



The Hill Of The Red Fox,
watercolour, 38x28cm



Max Mackerel,
watercolour,
18x26cm

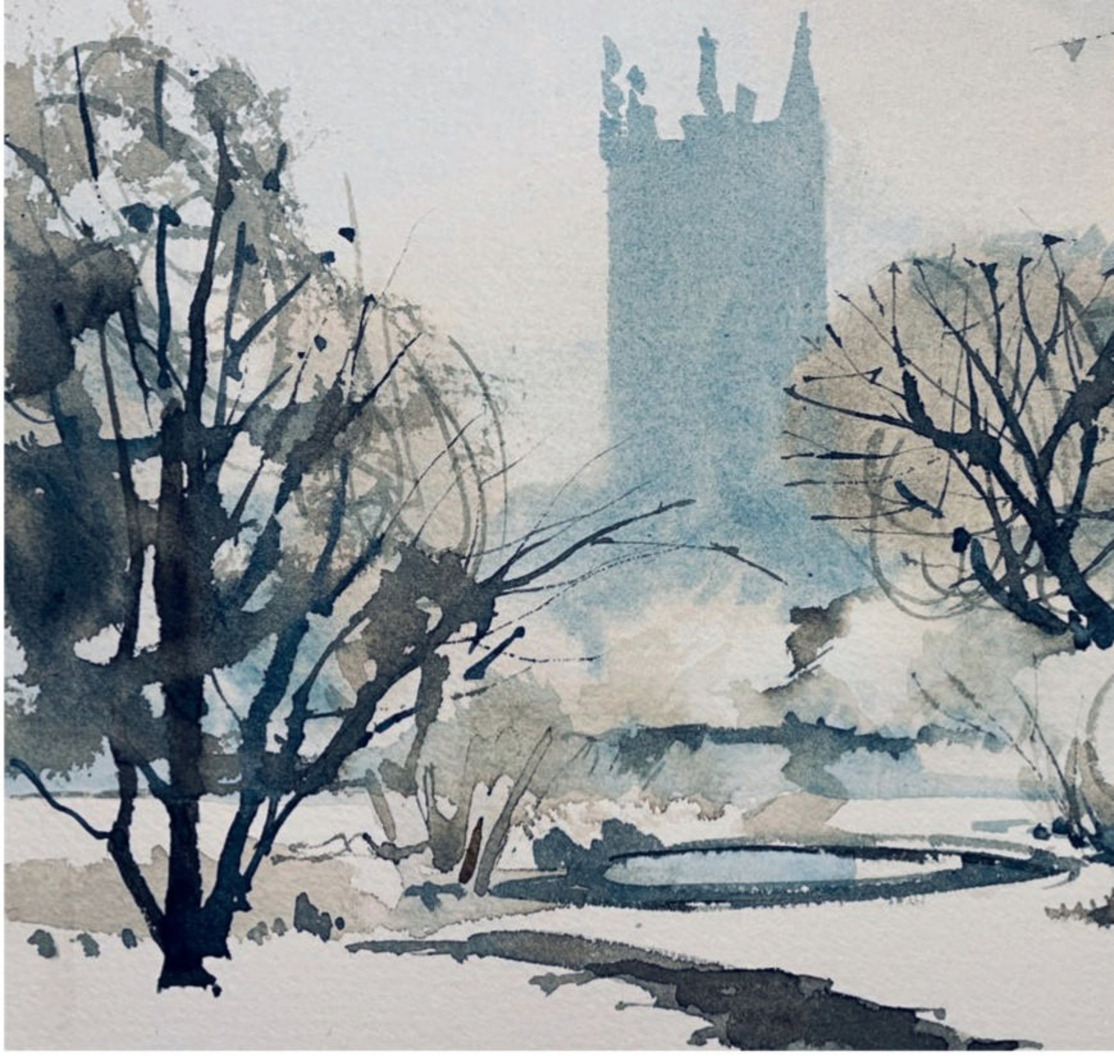
model and not work in a bubble. My absolute painting hero has to be the man himself, John Singer Sargent. He produced pure gold whatever medium he used.

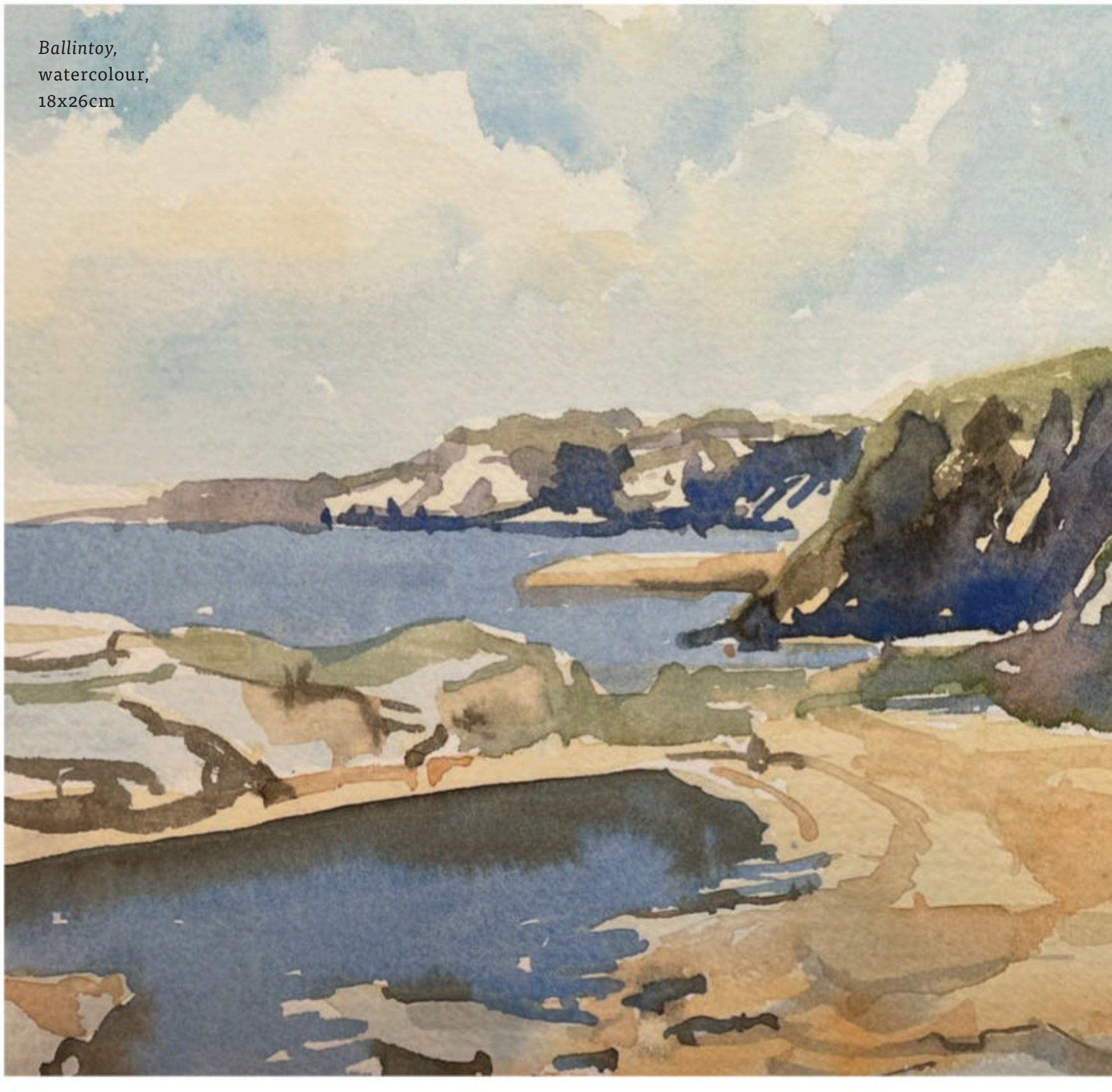
In my mind a quick or loose style creates an expressive outcome that has energy and atmosphere.
The most important thing is tonal value, cranking up the darks and making the lights look even lighter. Colour temperature, wet-in-wet, dry brush, painting in the negative, drawing with the brush and soft edges are all techniques that can easily be understood if explained in a compelling way. I teach this on my regular Zoom demo every Wednesday afternoon where I review everyone's homework and keep them on an exciting journey of discovery.

My watercolour demos are mainly taken from a photo reference.
The composition is already there and I find it fun to paint. I see this as important preparation for painting in the great outdoors. The challenge then is finding the composition or, 'the money shot,' to use an ad term. But once found there's nothing like painting *en plein air* and it's why my retreat students keep coming back for more.

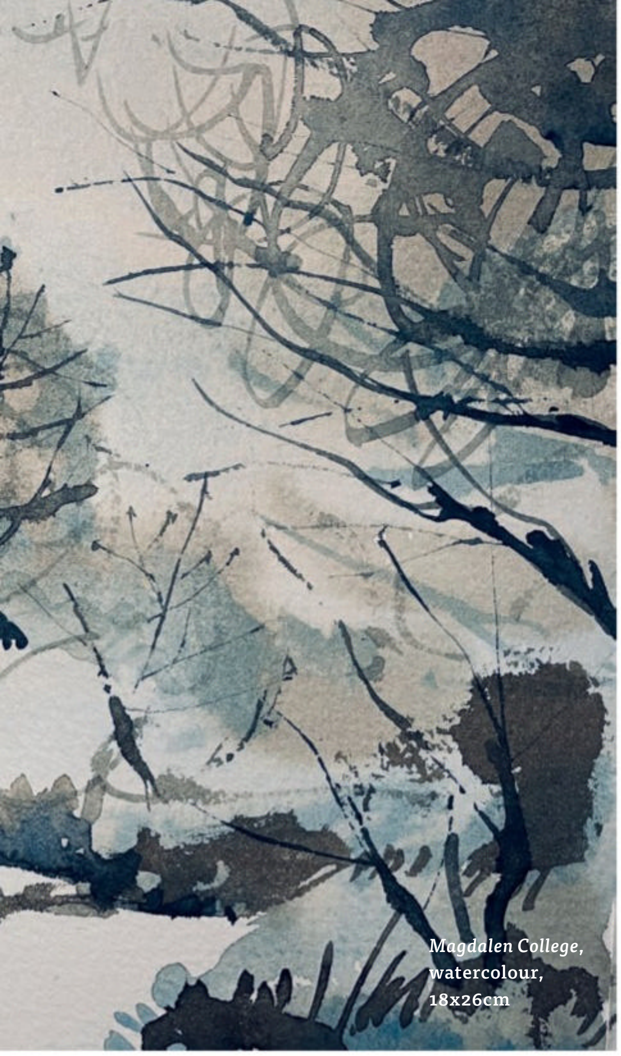
Sky, foliage, water and structure are the four main ingredients of any landscape, but it's about how you interpret the scene, rather than simply copy it as a camera.
For me, atmosphere wins over accuracy every time and it just makes paintings look fresh, simple and pleasing to the eye. It's all about being inventive and being prepared to be wrong now and again, that's how you learn. My mantra is 'Don't be a slave to what you see, be the master of what you want.' I'm always looking for strong lights and darks, the best bit is the magic of the transparent shadow wash that transforms the painting in the final few minutes.

I have two studios, one at Kew Art Studio where I teach in-person and the other is where it all started, my studio at home where I only paint in watercolour and keep all my materials.
Paper is usually 140lb High White Rough, there's no need to stretch paper at this weight. I have no more than 16 artist quality classic colours in tube form that I squeeze into my tin and I use a variety of good quality sable and mop style brushes. My zoom demos are also from my home

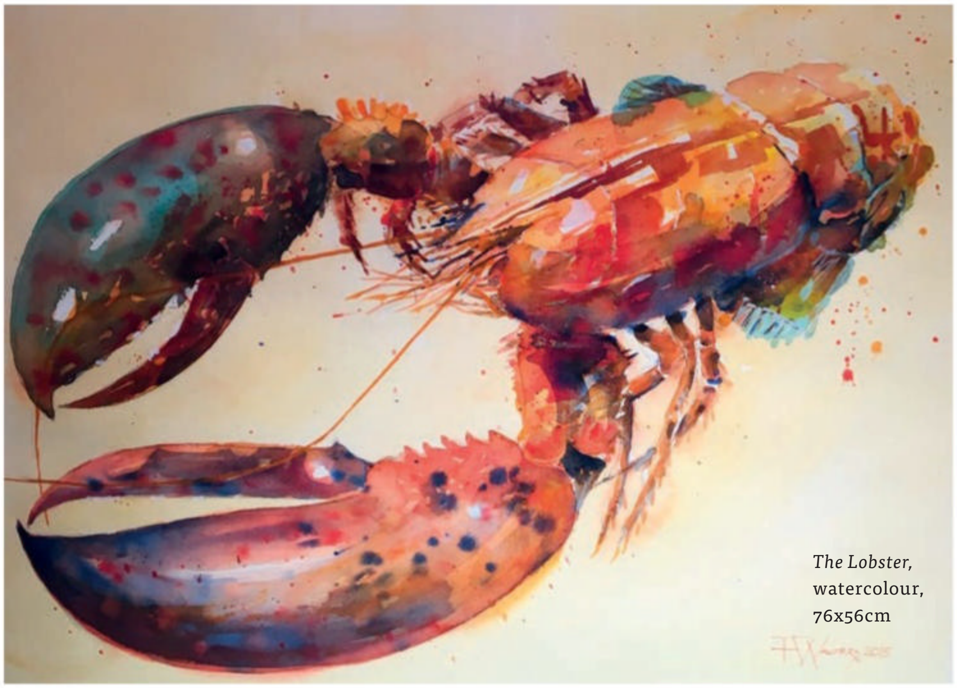




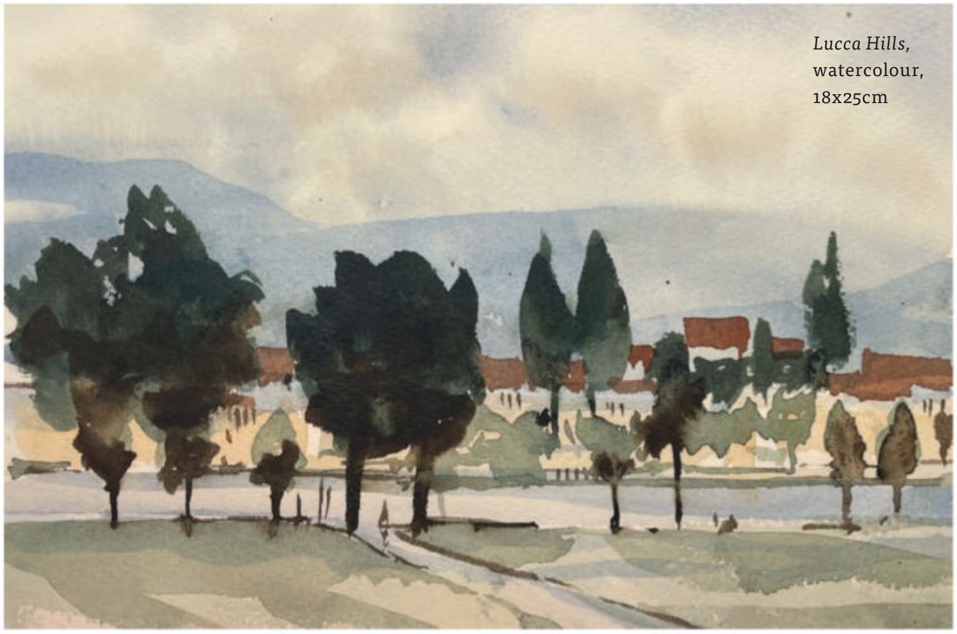
Ballintoy,
watercolour,
18x26cm



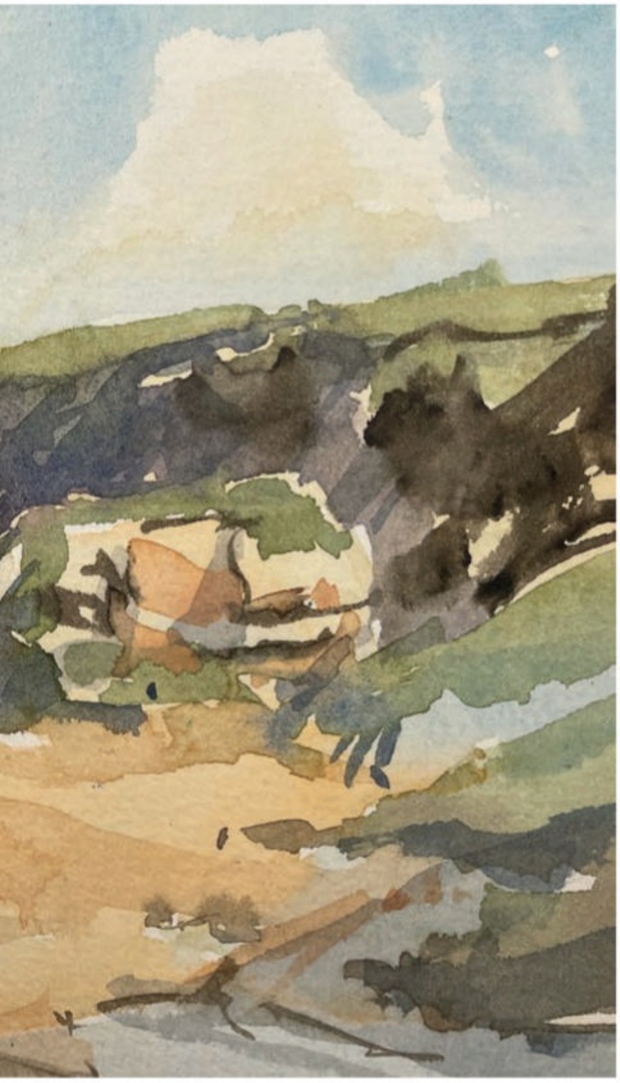
Magdalen College, watercolour, 18x26cm



The Lobster, watercolour, 76x56cm



Lucca Hills, watercolour, 18x25cm

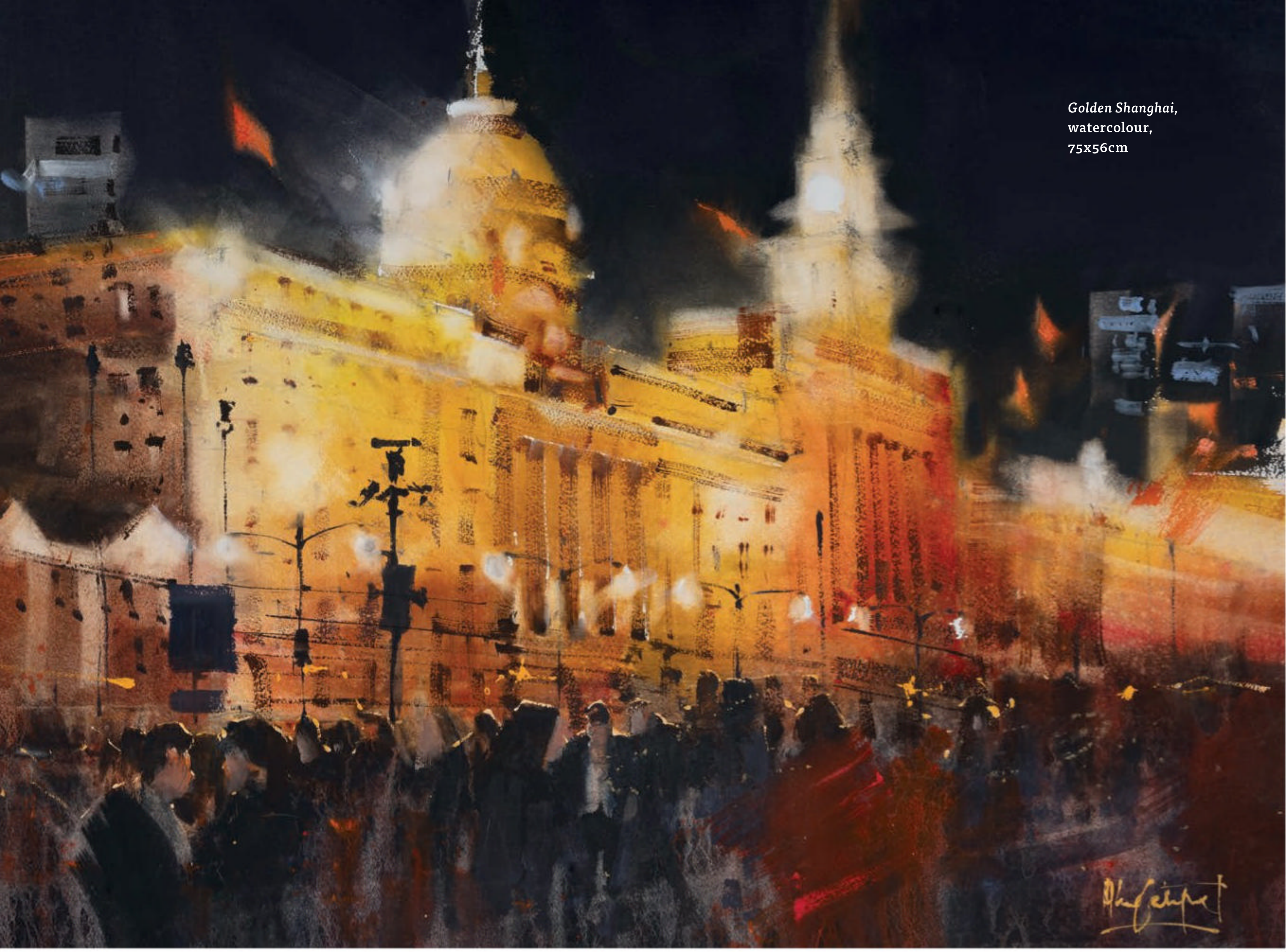


studio where I have overhead camera technology driven through my MacBook which I take on the road for demos and workshops to art groups and societies in Southeast England.

I love teaching beginners and watching their work develop.
The beginners then become accomplished, and I continue to keep everything fun; I certainly don't do intensive. I teach my students to paint like them, not like me. I'm into my 5th year with my three main retreats, painting the palaces of Andalusia, the renaissance wonders of Tuscany and the historic beauty of Provence.

I still feel that I am a tutor first and an artist second.
I teach like I would have liked someone teaching me when I first started. I've broken down watercolour painting into its component parts and made it accessible to all. I believe that art is there for everyone, and I love seeing my students fulfilling their potential.

I think every artist has their own favourite painting, then it's superseded by something new.
I've always had a soft spot for my *Lobster*, painted on a full imperial sheet, I like painting marine animals for a break from landscape now and again. My current favourite landscape is *Eilean Donan First Light*, conjured when that rare moment in watercolour when everything seems to drop in place, especially the brooding sky. I was humbled to have this accepted and hanging at the 76th Summer Exhibition of the Chelsea Art Society. The bar has been raised, so I need to keep my brushes wet. ◻



Golden Shanghai, watercolour, 75x56cm

Master plan

Every year, The British Art Prize has a fabulous consortium of judges. This month, **ALVARO CASTAGNET**, one of the world's great watercolour masters, tells us about his involvement with the prize

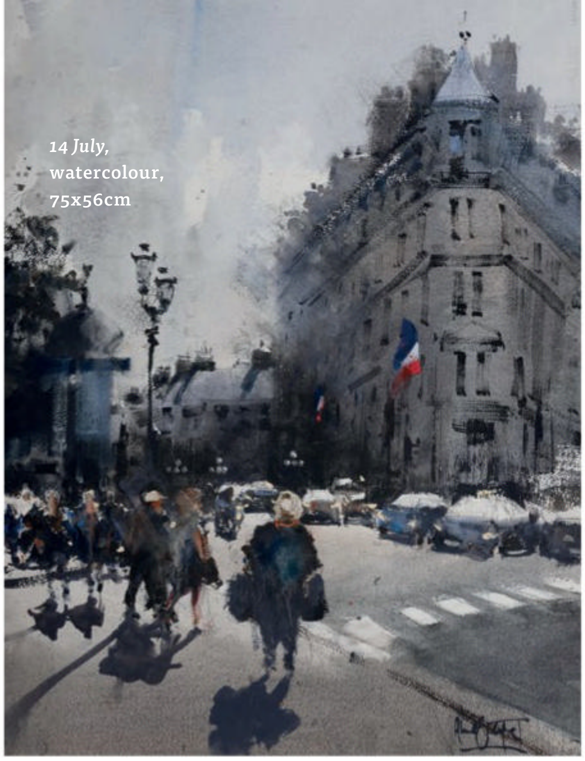
WHY SHOULD YOU ENTER COMPETITIONS such as The British Art Prize? Think of it as a vehicle for getting your name and art out there. It accelerates your artistic development, boosts your visibility and connects you to the wider art world, benefiting both your personal and professional journey.

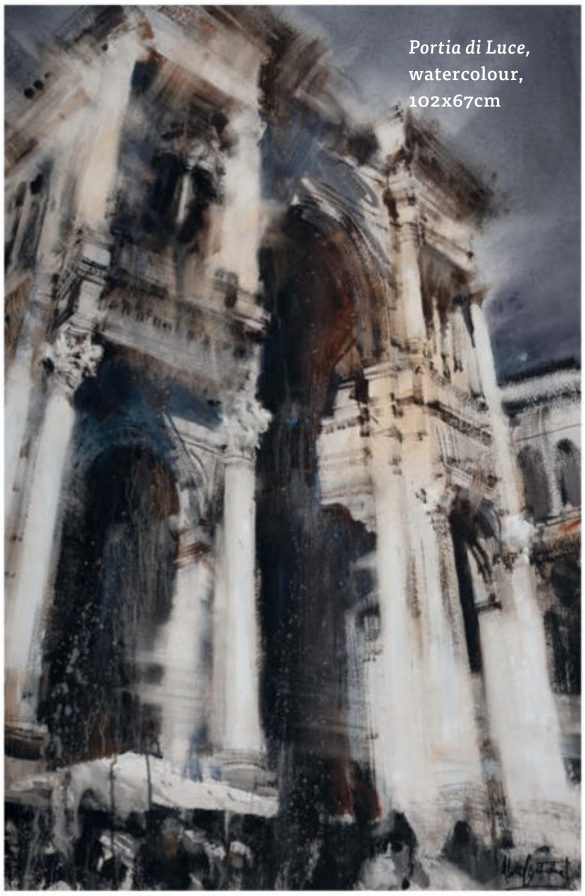
Last year, the quality of the entries to the British Art Prize was outstanding. They were diverse, creative and wholly impressive; making judging both exciting and challenging.

When judging an art competition, I look for work that evokes a genuine emotional response and holds the viewer's attention. Innovation – whether in concept or technique – is equally important, as it reveals the artist's unique voice and vision. Above all, I value clarity in how the theme is interpreted and how the emotion is communicated.

For 2025's competition, I hope to see a wide variety of styles and fresh ideas; art that feels authentic and expresses real emotion. I'm excited for creative interpretations of the theme, bold experimentation and artists who aren't afraid to take risks, to expand and push the limits of their chosen medium. Most of all, I look forward to seeing the courage and passion that each artist brings to the competition.

Art competitions are a platform to showcase your unique vision. Embrace the process with curiosity and kindness toward yourself. Your art deserves to be seen, and your voice matters!


14 July, watercolour, 75x56cm


Portia di Luce, watercolour, 102x67cm

THE BRITISH ART PRIZE 2025

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The annual British Art Prize, brought to you by *Artists & Illustrators* and supported by Raw Umber Studios, continues to be one of the most major art competitions with international reach. It gives valuable exposure and recognition to artists and attracts thousands of quality entries from around the world. With cash prizes, exclusive art materials and an exhibition at gallery@oxo for the 50 finalists, from 26-30 November 2025, this year's competition also offers a once-in-a-lifetime first prize of a week-long solo exhibition at Panter & Hall, home to contemporary artists from across the globe.

Following the London exhibition, the January 2026 British Art Prize Winners' special issue of *Artists & Illustrators* will feature an exclusive 10-page editorial, with images of the shortlisted artworks and winners. The February 2026 issue will also showcase a standout six-page article about the People's Choice Award winner. These features offer unrivalled exposure for you and your work in the art world.

It's time to set your chosen medium to paper. The opportunities awaiting you are endless, so start working on your entries today! ◻

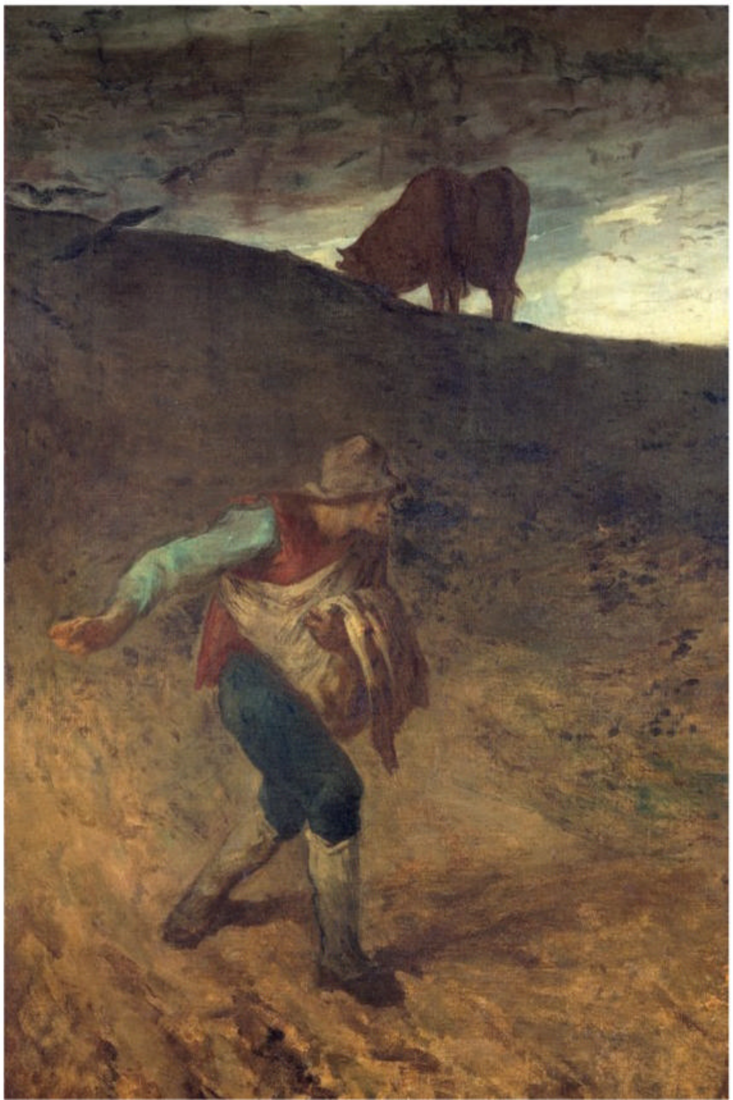
HOW TO ENTER

Visit
artistsandillustrators.co.uk/britishartprize2025
The entry fee is £22 for the first artwork and £18 for any additional artwork
Deadline for entries:
19 September 2025

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON. VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON. BEQUEATHED BY CONSTANTINE ALEXANDER IONIDES

Life on the land

Marking 150 years since his death, **JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET**'s unflinching vision of peasant life takes centre stage at the National Gallery. By *Rosalind Ormiston*



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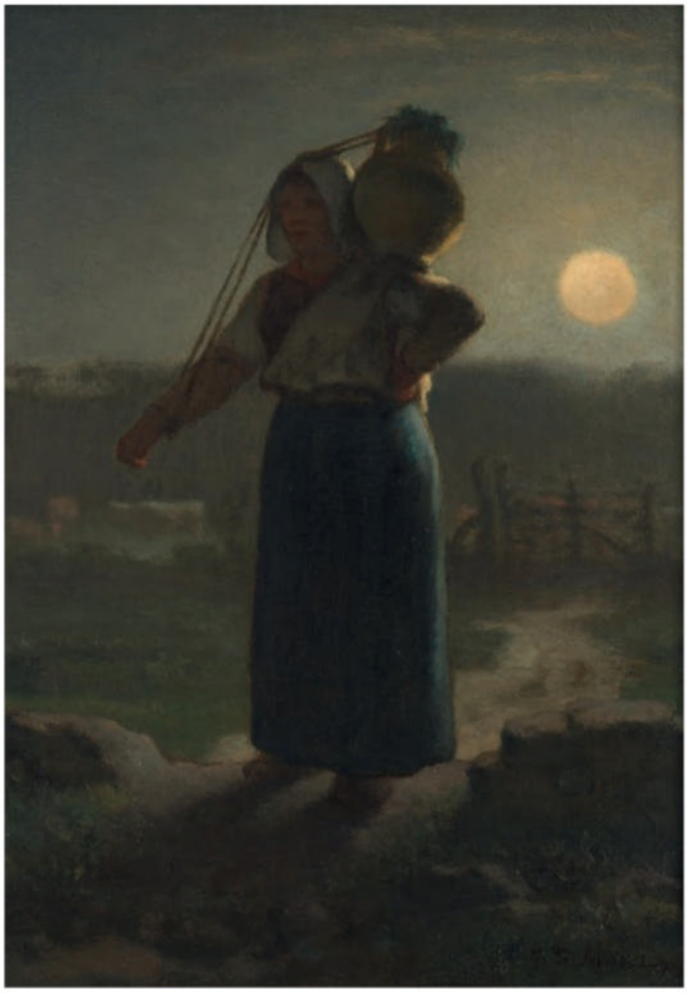
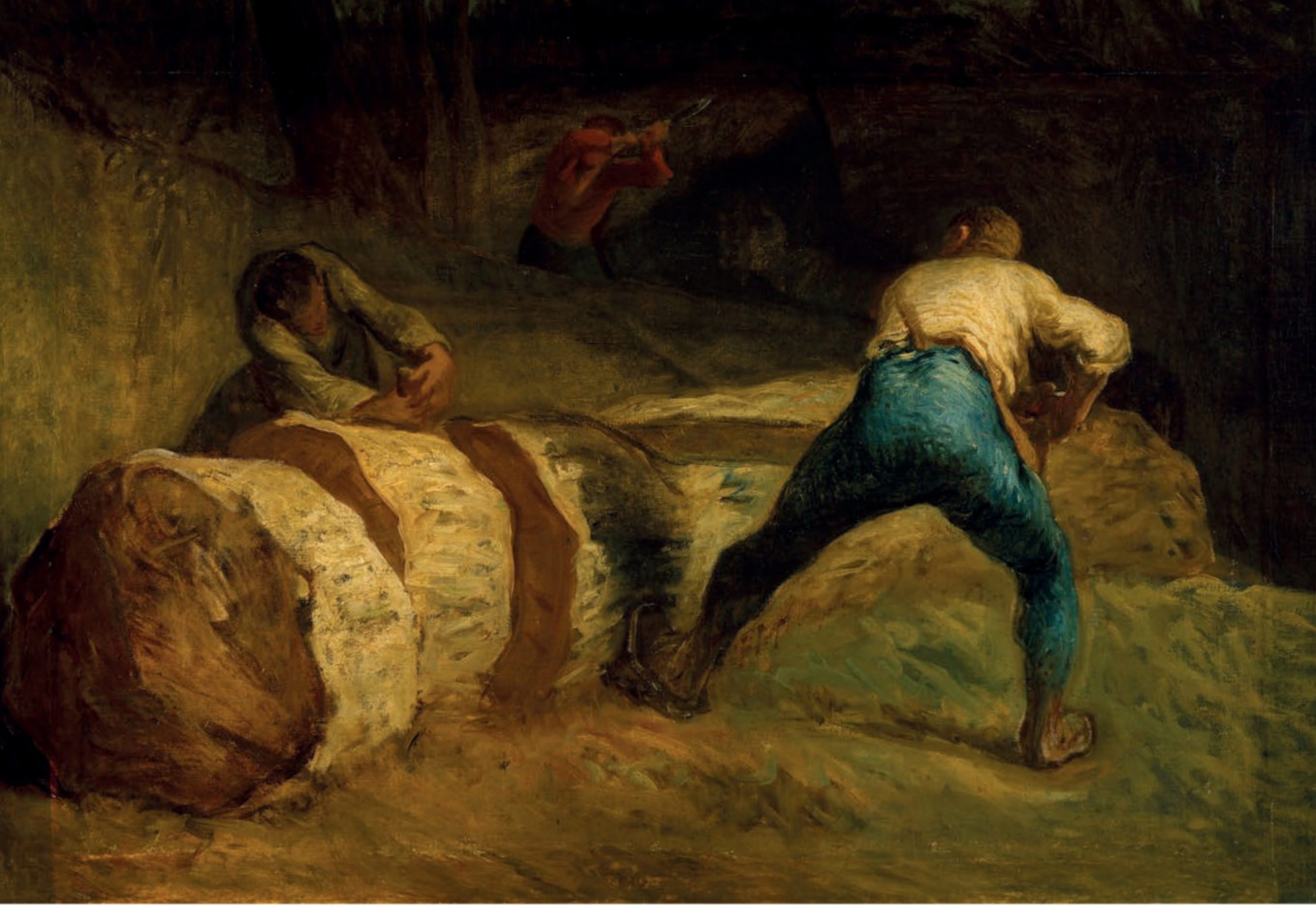


THE HENRY BARBER TRUST, THE BARBER INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM



Jean-François Millet once said, "I am a peasant amongst peasants." It summarised the French painter's empathy with rural communities working on the land. They became the subjects of his remarkable drawings and paintings produced in the region of Normandy and the Barbizon near Paris, in mid 19th-century France. Millet depicted the rural peasant poor, the agricultural labourers, the sowers and gleaners, the woodcutters and faggot gatherers. He portrayed the female young and old workers, shepherdesses and goose-girls, milkmaids and the water-drawers at wells. Predominantly his subjects were workers who went unnoticed – seen perhaps across fields or on a country lane – until featured in Millet's low-key perceptive observation of how some of the poorest people in France existed, on the land.

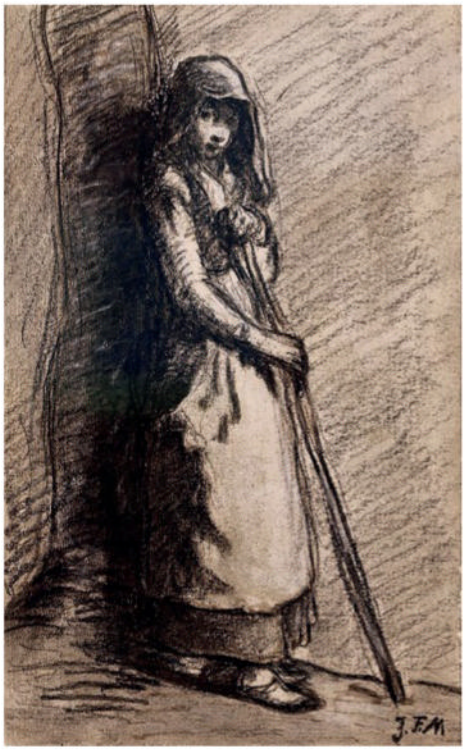
2025 marks the 150th anniversary of the death of France's exceptional artist, Jean-François Millet (1814-1875) who died aged 60, on 20 January 1875. Surprisingly there has not been an exhibition in Britain dedicated to Millet for 50 years. Now, to celebrate his life and work, this year an exhibition at the National Gallery, London, *Millet: Life on the Land* is focusing on the artist's relationship to the rural landscape and the lives of agricultural labourers. They were known, perhaps condescendingly, as 'independent peasantry,' reliant on casual, seasonal work. These were the people he chose to draw and paint, revealing the austerity of everyday life in farming communities. The exhibition explores Millet's years in Paris in the 1840s; from 1849 living in the hamlet of Barbizon on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau, around 40 miles south of Paris. There, he would become one of the most significant members of the Barbizon School of Painting, a commune for artists. The village of Barbizon with its agricultural landscape, working farms, and labourers – the landless workers – would be at the core of the artist's work.

Millet was born into an affluent farming family, in Gruchy, Greville-Hague, Normandy. He worked on the family farm taking part in its day-to-day running. He was educated and a reader of classics including a favourite, Virgil. He studied the bible too, drawing on its parables and historical accounts to inform his work. From this background, his artistic talents emerged at an early age. As a young artist, Millet was noted for his ability to memorise locations or people he had encountered with a talent for recollecting facial expressions and body movements to assimilate into compositions.

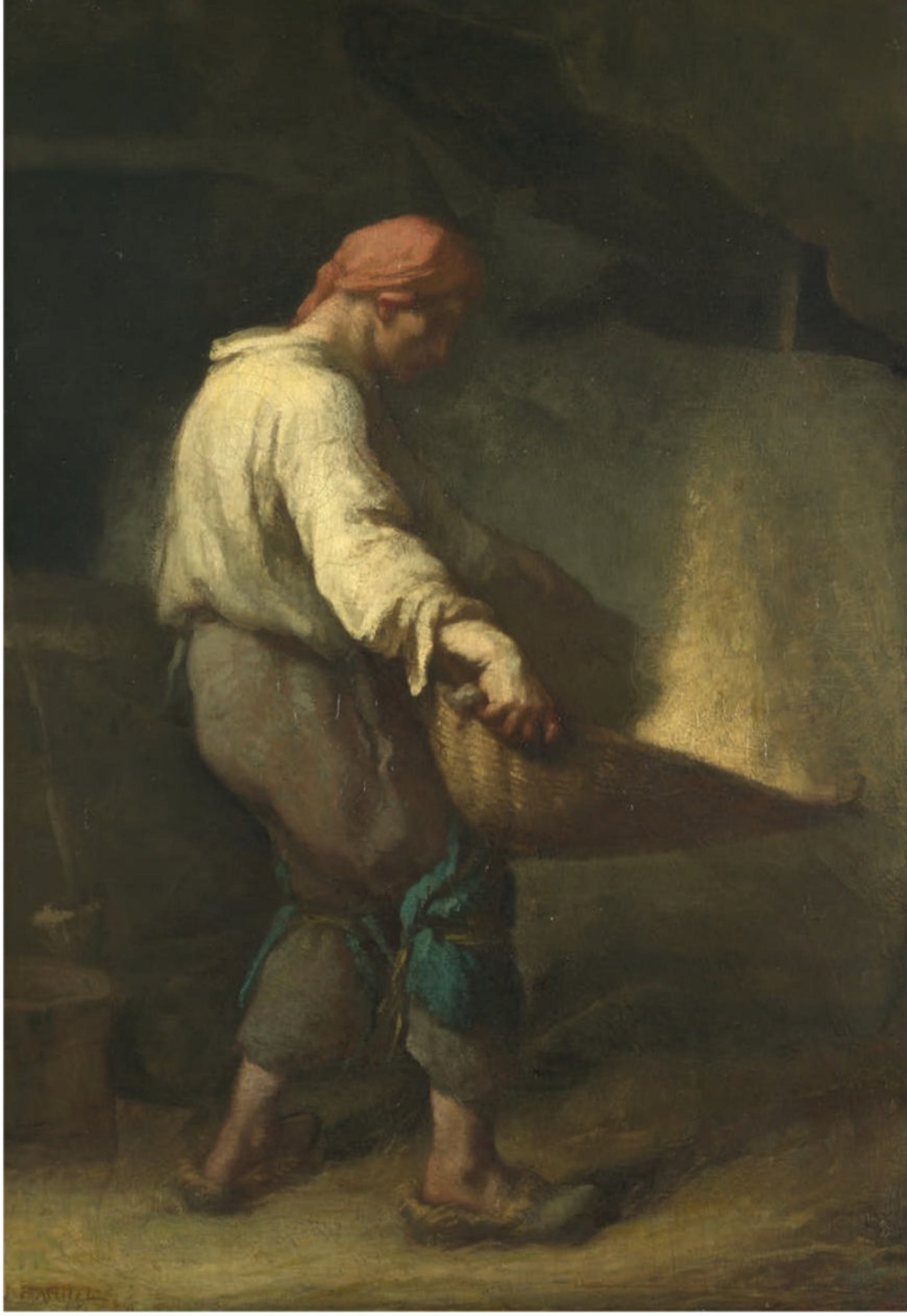
In 1837, the artist moved to Paris to study art on a scholarship at the Paul Delaroche studio, and later Academie Suisse. Both gave Millet access to drawing from the life model. His ability to embody live action in his work came to the attention of the Paris Salon in 1848 when he exhibited *The Winnower*, (page 40) 1847-48 (National Gallery, London). It was his first major work of an agricultural labourer. In the ▸

FAR LEFT *The Sower*, 1847-8, oil on canvas, 95.3x61.3cm **LEFT** *A Milkmaid*, about 1853, oil on canvas, 32.5x24cm **ABOVE** *The Wood Sawyers*, 1850-2 oil on canvas, 57x81cm

COOPER GALLERY, BARNSLEY MUSEUMS. GIVEN BY SIR MICHAEL ERNEST SADLER AND LADY SADLER IN MEMORY OF DR AND MRS M T SADLER, 1923



NATIONAL GALLERY



ABOVE *The Shepherdess*, about 1849, black and white chalk and grey and brown wash on cream paper, 16.8x10cm
RIGHT *The Winnower*, about 1847-8, oil on canvas 100.5×71cm **FAR RIGHT** *L'Angélus*, 1857-9, oil on canvas, 55.5x66cm

composition, a winnower balances his basket against his thigh as his shoulders hunch to support the weight while throwing the grain and chaff into the air to separate it. The chaff flies upward and dust envelops the air. The painting received high praise from art critics for being 'earthy' and evocative of agricultural life. The painting was purchased at the Salon by Alexandre-Auguste Ledru-Rollin, Minister of the Interior of the newly-formed Republican government.

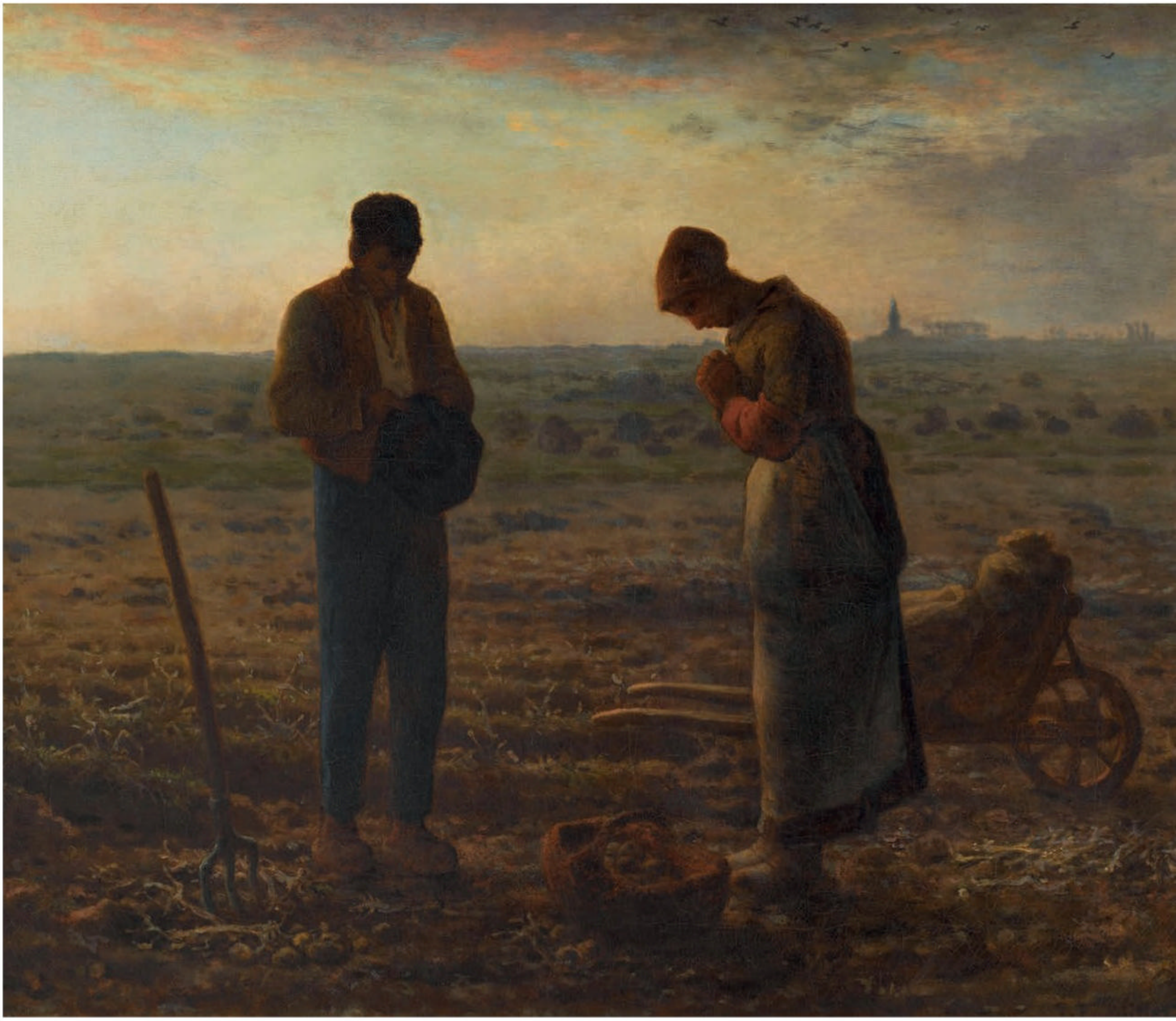
Millet was a Republican. Was it a coincidence that the winnower's clothing resembled the Republican tri-colours of red, white and blue? Also seen in another work of the same year, *The Sower,* (page 38) 1847-48, (Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales), and *The Gleaners*, 1857 (Musee d'Orsay, Paris) a later work. Millet kept a wardrobe of agricultural clothing including clogs, as authentic props for his models – often from the peasant community – to wear. The same clothes appear in different paintings. He preferred to depict traditional tools too, avoiding modern farming tools.

In 1854, returning home to Gruchy after the death of his mother, Millet sketched, then painted the local women at work, the goose girl tending her birds, a young shepherdess resting, women drawing water from the well, and milkmaids carrying filled copper containers of milk on their shoulders. His works vividly portrayed where the citizens of Paris got their provisions, and the work involved. The artist paid attention to detail; from the grasses stuffed into the mouth of a milk container to stop spillages to the long leather strap fitted to the neck of it, to be held tautly in one hand with the other hand on a hip to balance the weight of the copper vessel.

There are impressive examples in the drawings and paintings shown in the National Gallery exhibition, including *A Shepherdess*, c.1850 (National Galleries of Scotland) created in black chalk with touches of blue. His model wore shoes in his drawing but was barefooted in the painting that followed. Were the models real workers? More often they were, although Millet was reserved about asking workers to pose, leaving it to his wife to ask permission. He took ideas for compositions from photographs and images in magazines, too.

Many galleries and museums in the UK hold significant works by Jean-François Millet. The reason for this is his popularity in Britain from the late 19th century. His work identified with the Pre-Raphaelite artists' aesthetic and the Arts and Crafts Movement. His art was shown in the London International Exhibition of 1862 and 1871; and from 1870, French art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel in London to avoid the

MUSÉE D'ORSAY, PARIS (RF 1877), © MUSÉE D'ORSAY, DIST. GRAND PALAIS RMN / PATRICE SCHMIDT

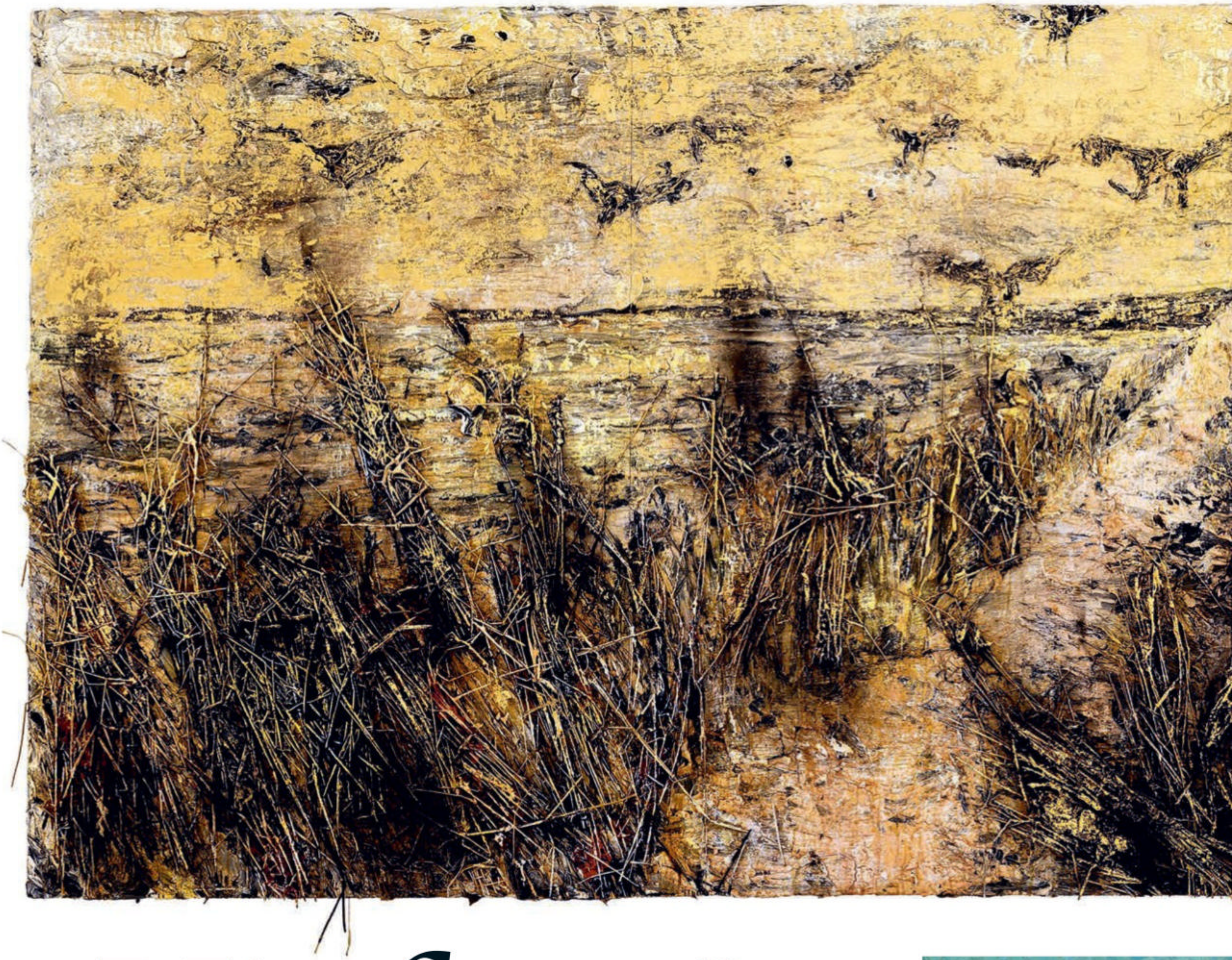


Franco-Prussian war in Paris, set up the 'Society of French Artists' exhibitions, which heightened Millet's status and presence in the British art market. Sarah Herring, the exhibition's curator explores Millet in Britain in the accompanying catalogue, written by by Herring and Simon Kelly.

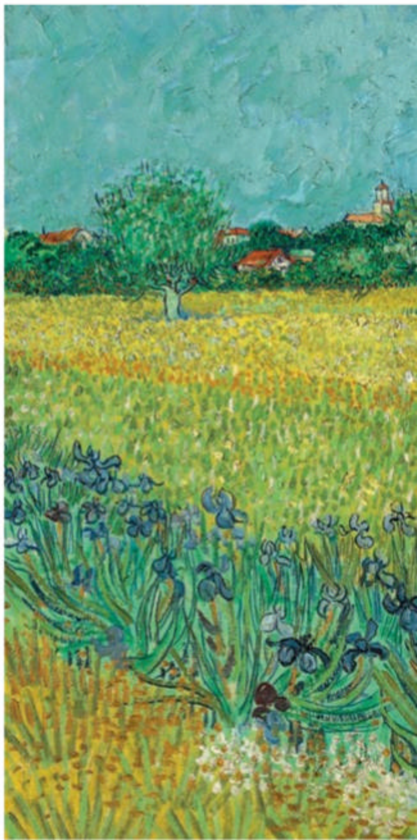
An exceptional French loan for *Millet: Life on the Land* is *L'Angélus* (above) 1857-59 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris). In this work, Millet gives insight to the peasants' private lives. The work is a solemn, near-religious composition. It depicts a man and woman, standing, facing each other in a field. Behind them, the sun is setting. The couple's heads are bowed in prayer for the bells of the distant church – seen on the horizon – are ringing to announce the Angelus, a Catholic prayer to commemorate the annunciation made to the Virgin Mary by the Angel Gabriel. It is repeated three times daily. The couple dignified in work and prayer are standing on a small plot of land, picking their potato harvest. They have stopped to recite the evening Angelus. Millet creates a near-audio visualisation of a daily event which structured the couple's lives.

In France, the cult of Marianism, followers of the Virgin Mary, was strong from 1830 to 1950. For Millet, the painting received mixed reviews from high praise to critical caricatures. It did not sell easily with the artist dropping his original asking price. Today, it is recognised as one of his most important – perhaps, the most important work – of his oeuvre. Research on this painting discovered that the female model was Adèle Moschner, a servant in Millet's household for four years. She recalled that the male model – posed separately – was a Father Mignon from the Barbizon peasant community. The church was St Paul's at Chailly-en-Bière where Millet was buried 150 years ago, in 1875. **nationalgallery.org.uk**

Millet: Life on the Land is on at the National Gallery, London from 7 August to 19 October 2025. Admission is free. ◻

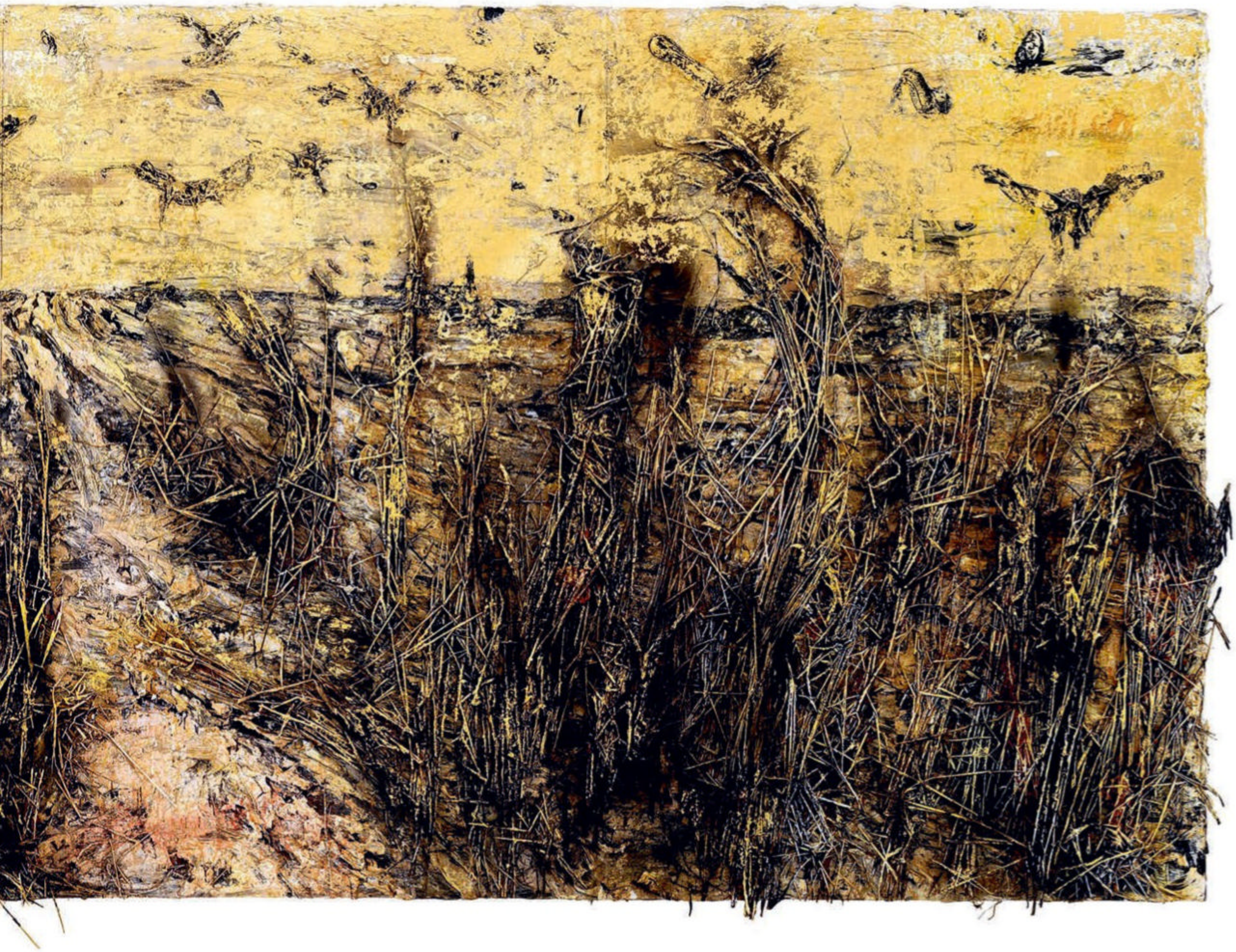


Kiefer & van Gogh

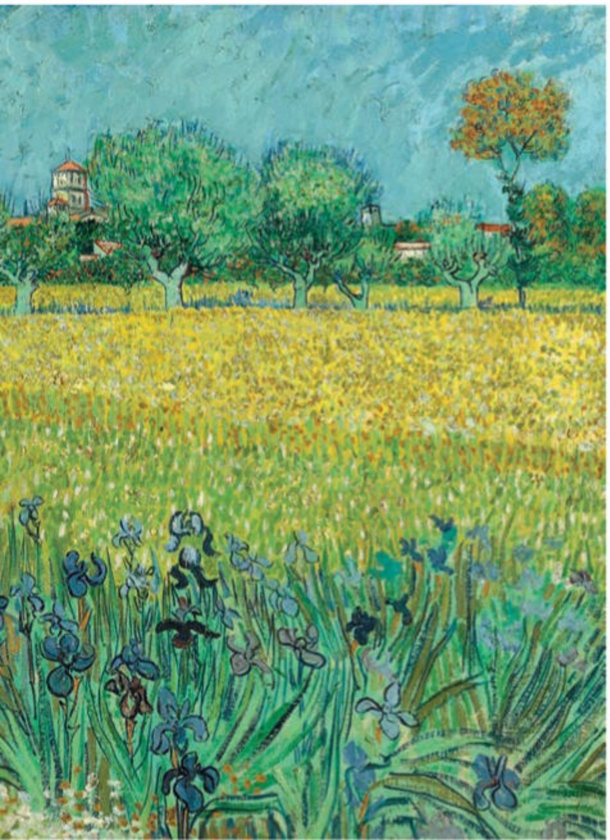


Anselm Kiefer's lifelong dialogue with van Gogh culminates in a powerful Royal Academy show exploring art, struggle and legacy.

By *Amanda Hodges*



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND WHITE CUBE. PHOTO: GEORGES PONCET. © ANSELM KIEFER



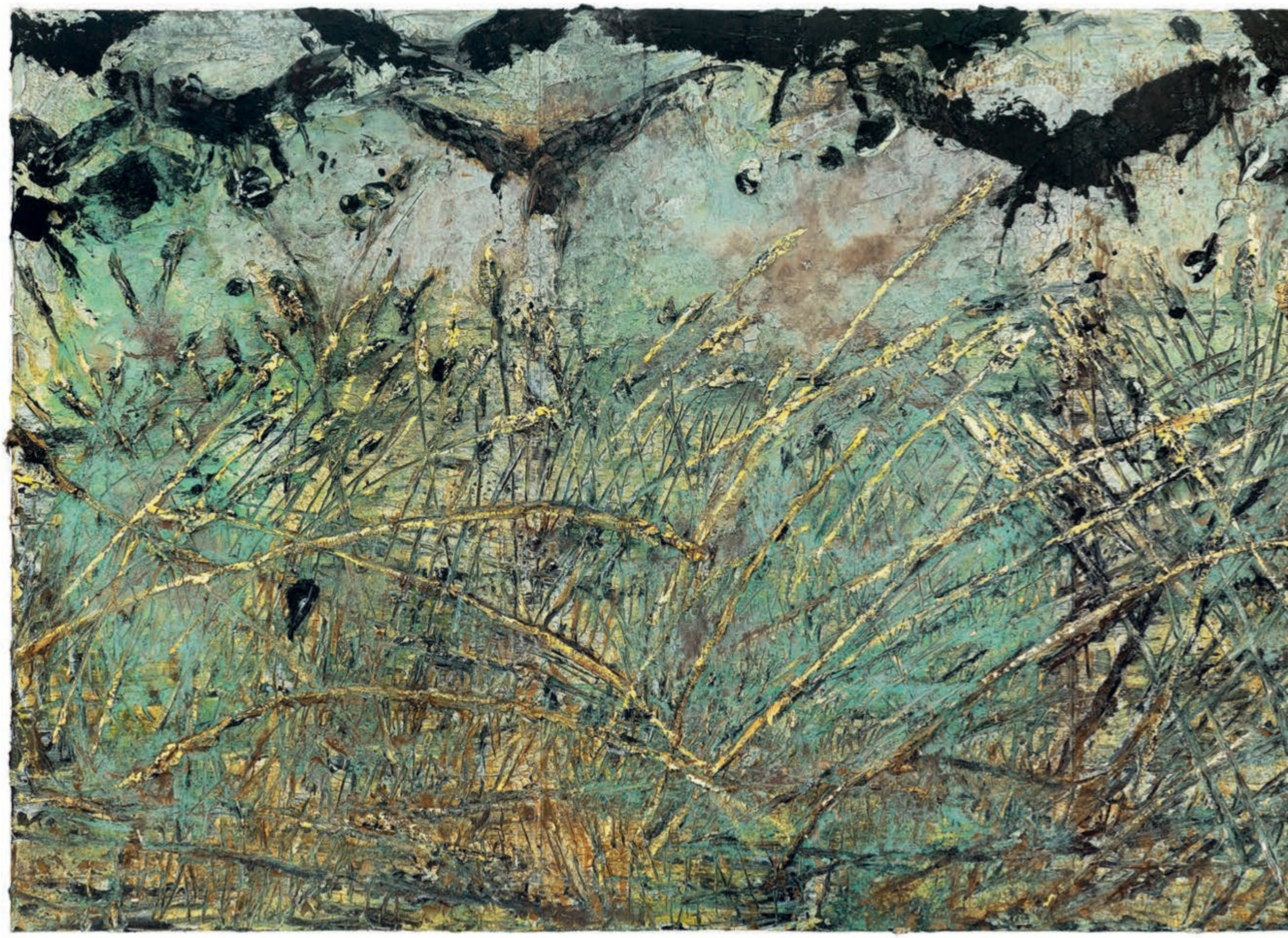
VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM (VINCENT VAN GOGH FOUNDATION)

ABOVE Anselm Kiefer, *The Crows (Die Krähen)*, 2019. Emulsion, oil, acrylic, shellac, gold leaf, straw and clay on canvas, 280x760cm. **LEFT** Vincent van Gogh, *Field with Irises near Arles*, 1888, oil on canvas, 54x65cm

“GREAT THINGS ARE NOT DONE BY IMPULSE, but by a series of small things brought together.” These are the words of Vincent van Gogh but also reflect the philosophy of renowned German contemporary artist, Anselm Kiefer, over whom he’s exerted a profound and lifelong influence, an artistic arc now traced within the Royal Academy’s innovative new exhibition. At the age of 18, Kiefer – awarded a travel grant – retraced van Gogh’s footsteps, on an “initiation journey,” exploring the Netherlands, Belgium and Paris, finishing his sojourn in Arles, southern France, the scene of many celebrated van Gogh paintings.

In a recent essay, Kiefer recalls this formative period, eschewing traditional biography in favour of a clear focus on the art itself. “What impressed me was the rational structure, the confident construction of his paintings, in a life that was increasingly slipping out of his control. Perhaps I felt, even then, that an artist’s work and life were separate.”

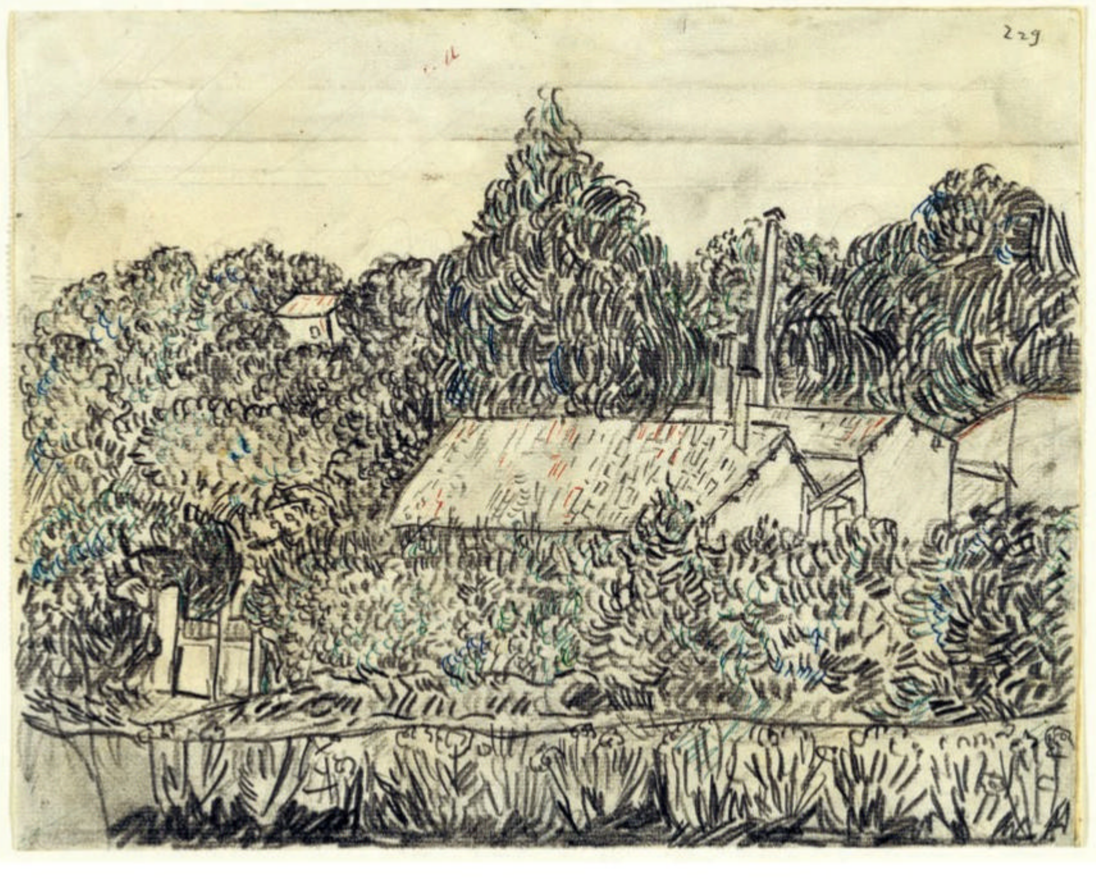
As a pioneer of Post-Impressionism, van Gogh declared to his supportive brother Theo, “I am always doing what I cannot do yet, to learn how to do it,” his single-minded focus is something Kiefer shares. Acknowledging the “endless struggle” present within his own art, Kiefer says, “I am unable ever to declare a work finished and complete.” Explaining why van Gogh inspires him, he shares, “He did not have flair or ease – everything was hard won. With van Gogh, his paintings are a feast despite everything. One believes in him. He defies all adversity; he does the impossible; he does not give up.” ▸



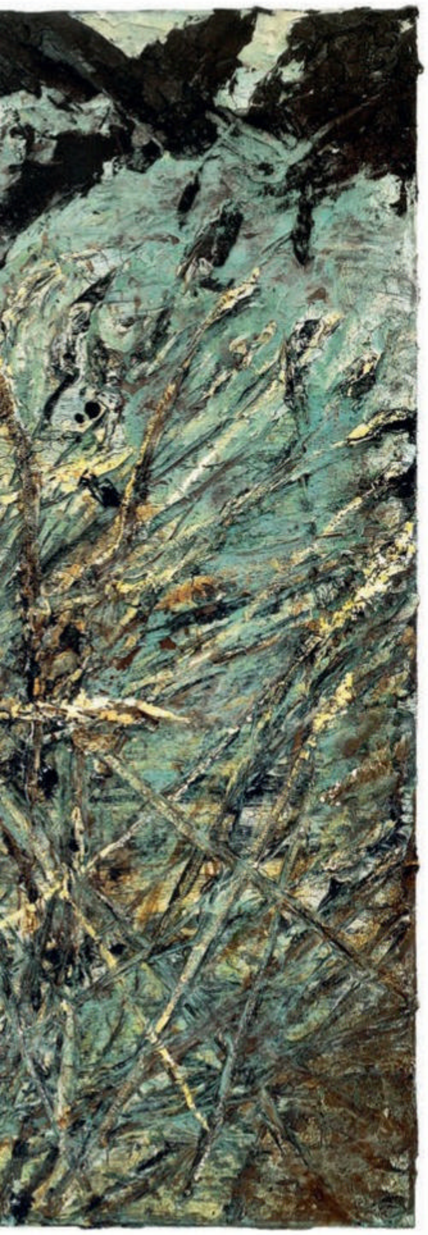
ESCHATON KUNSTSTIFTUNG. PHOTO: CHARLES DUPRAT. © ANSELM KIEFER

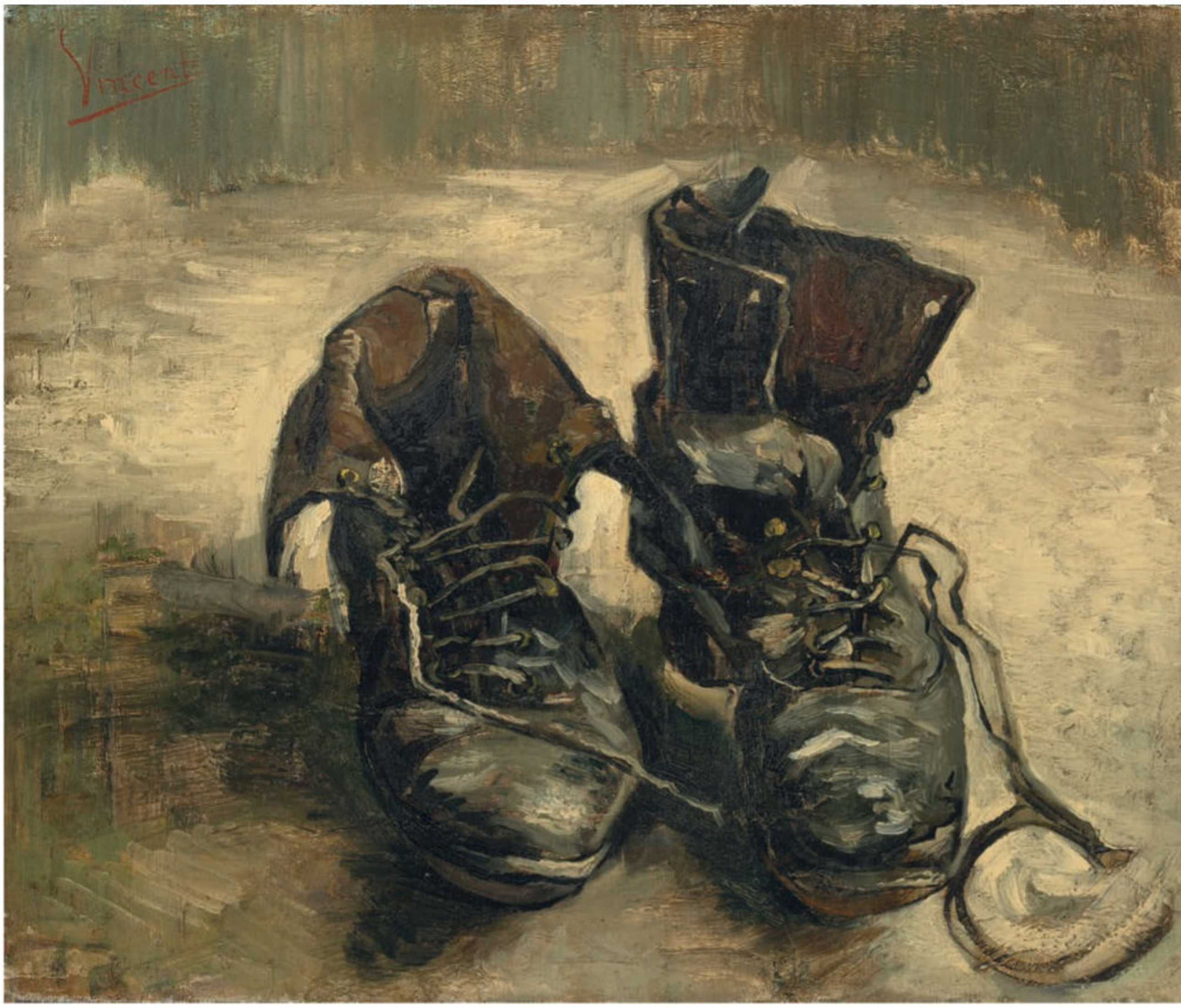
Applauding what he calls van Gogh's 'workman-like clarity' he adds, "Every single one of his forceful brushstrokes is a manifestation of defiance. This determination not only to attempt the impossible but to force it, was what attracted me to the artist, and continues to do so today," something Simon Schama has coined Kiefer's "perpetual itch of creative discontent, the reach for meaning beyond the frame or the microcosm," an outlook shared by both artists, centuries apart.

During his early artistic pilgrimage, Kiefer made drawings inspired in style by van Gogh and the painter's influence remains potent, something the Royal Academy is reflecting in its extensive exhibition (closely developed with the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam) which showcases the strong connection between the two artists. Presenting a selection of van Gogh's drawings and paintings alongside early Kiefer sketches, there are also other artworks dating from 2019, a period when the artist was keenly conscious of creating work under van Gogh's palpable inspiration.

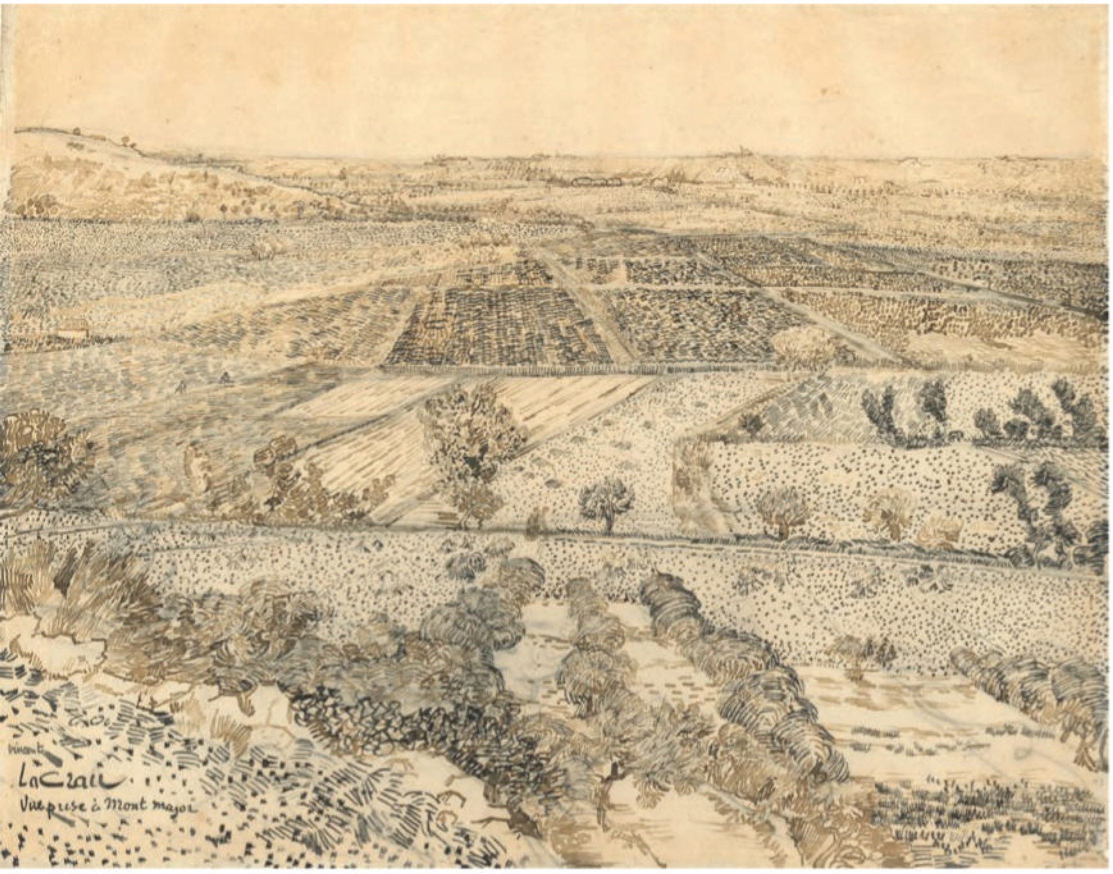


PRIVATE COLLECTION. PHOTO: GEORGES PONCET. © ANSELM KIEFER





VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM (VINCENT VAN GOGH FOUNDATION)

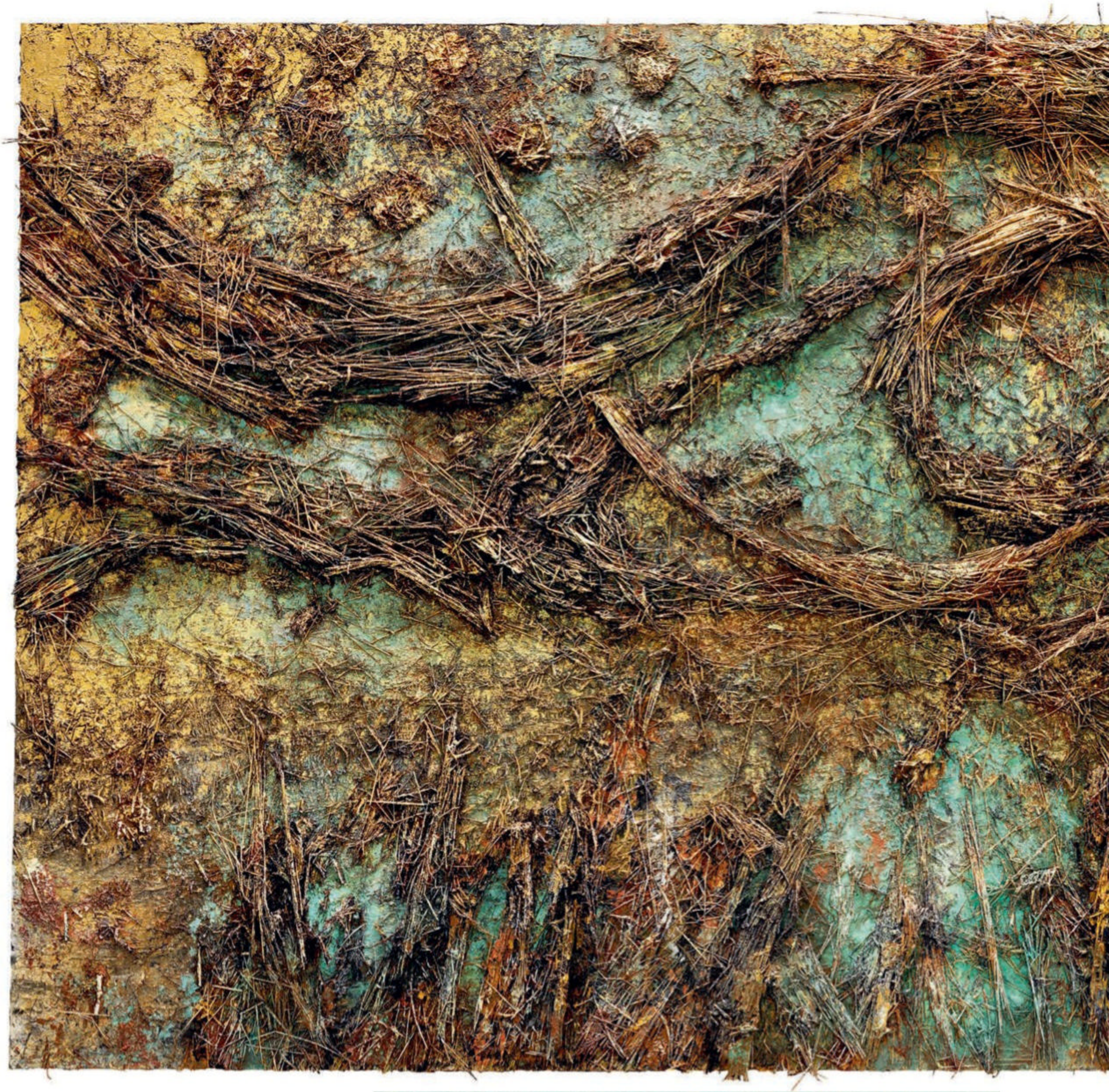

Vincent
La Crau
Vue prise à Mont majour

VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM (VINCENT VAN GOGH FOUNDATION)

TOP LEFT Anselm Kiefer, *Nevermore*, 2014, emulsion, oil, acrylic, shellac, gold leaf and sediment of electrolysis on canvas, 330x570cm. **ABOVE** Vincent van Gogh, *Shoes*, 1886, oil on canvas, 38.1x45.3cm. **FAR LEFT** Anselm Kiefer, *Untitled*, 1963, graphite and ballpoint pen on paper, 23.6x29.8cm. **LEFT** Vincent van Gogh, *La Crau Seen from Montmajour*, 1888, pencil, pen and reed pen and ink, on paper, 49x61cm.

As RA curator Julien Domercq explains, “The way he likes to think things through is to sketch, and Anselm sketches on a very large scale.” From this emerged a series of paintings that led to collaboration between the Van Gogh Museum and the Royal Academy. The Academy last staged a retrospective of Kiefer’s work over a decade ago, this new show offering a reappraisal which, as Julien comments, coincides “serendipitously” with the artist’s 18th birthday.

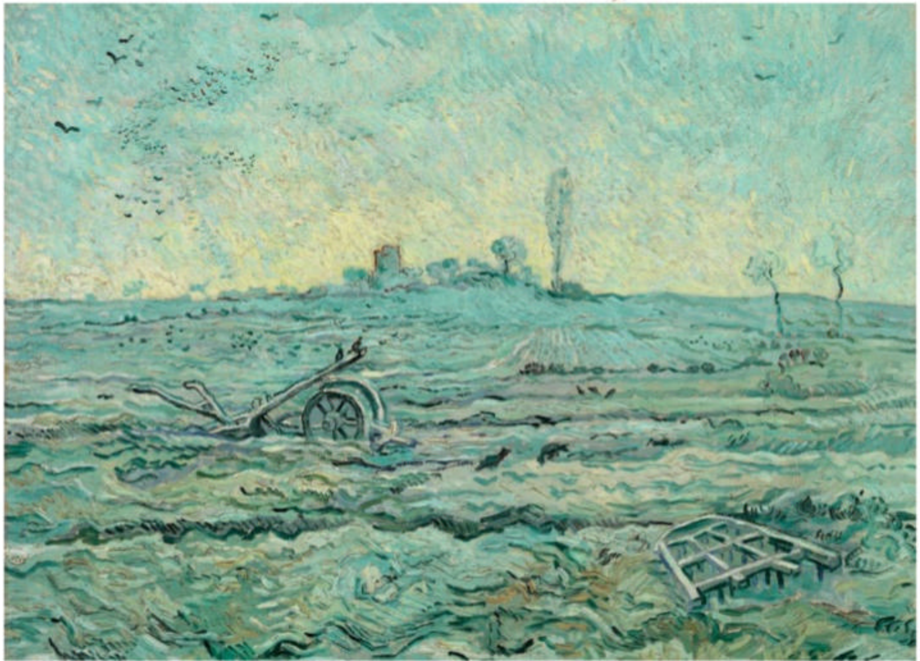
Comparison is not the aim, simply the opportunity to gain fresh understanding through a different frame of reference. Julien says, “It’s not just a story of artistic inspiration because ultimately that wouldn’t be the most interesting thing. To me, it’s a question of how they relate visually and also how one enables us to get new insights into the other.” He ▶



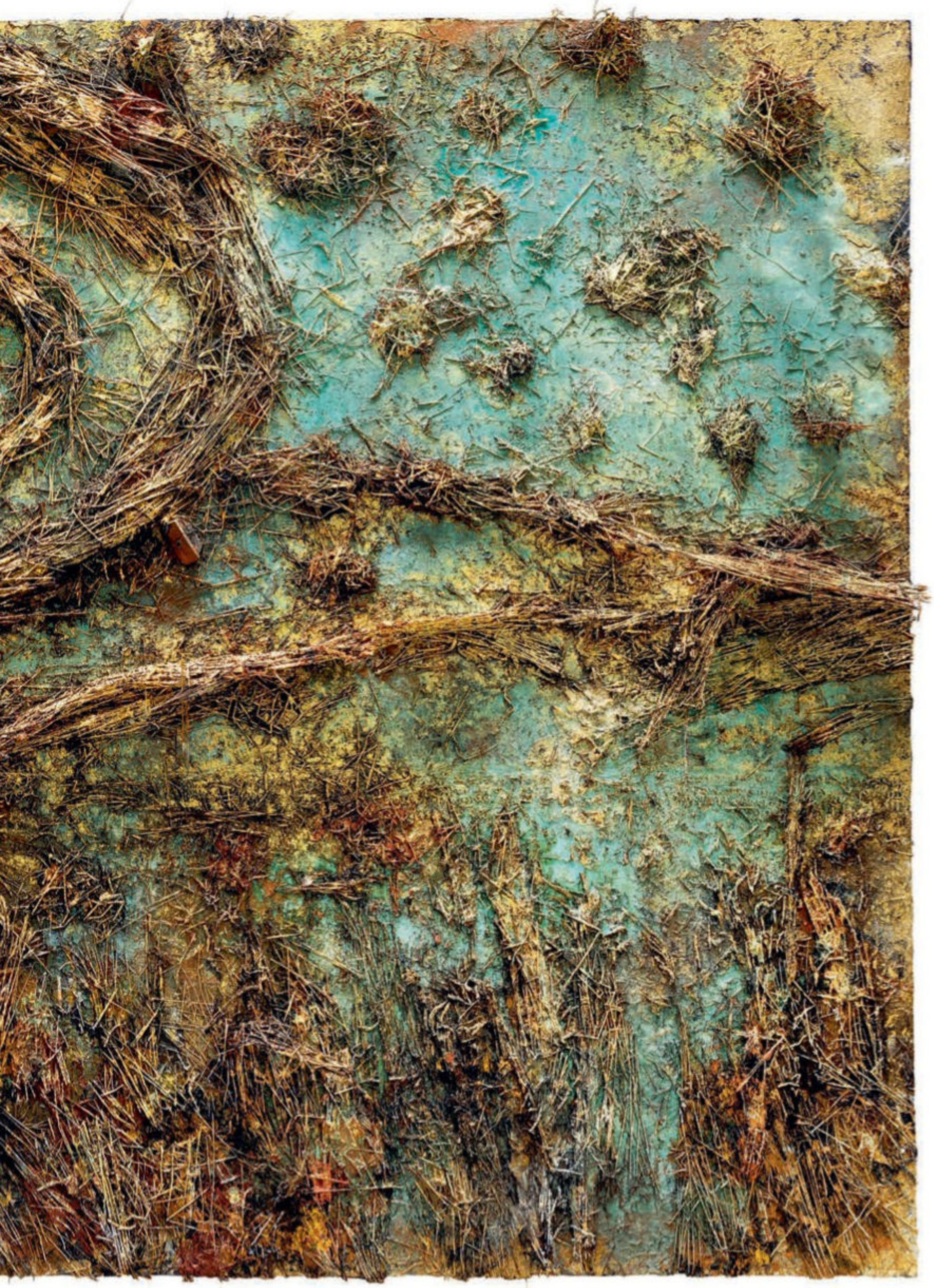
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND WHITE CUBE. PHOTO: GEORGES PONCET. © ANSELM KIEFER

echoes Kiefer's clear emphasis on van Gogh's work. "People love seeing this tormented soul in van Gogh, someone who pours all his emotions onto the canvas but actually he's an incredibly deliberate and thoughtful artist, that's what makes him extraordinary." Van Gogh himself wrote, "It is looking at things for a long time that ripens you and gives a deeper meaning." The majority of his mature work reflects this philosophy.

What unites the two artists? Julien says, "Similarities are 'painterliness,' some affinities in composition," and cites in particular "a work like *The Crows* [Kiefer's response to van Gogh's original] – the high horizon lines – showing you some things close up and then a deep, receding landscape. Van Gogh does that a lot successfully and Kiefer's obviously inspired by the material



VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM (VINCENT VAN GOGH FOUNDATION)



LEFT Anselm Kiefer, *The Starry Night (De sterrennacht)*, 2019, emulsion, oil, acrylic, shellac, straw, gold leaf, wood, wire and sediment of electrolysis on canvas, 470x840cm. **BELOW** Vincent van Gogh, *Snow-Covered Field with a Harrow (after Millet)*, 1890, oil on canvas, 72.1x92cm

nature of things: wheatfields, hay, which van Gogh paints but which Kiefer actually sticks onto the canvas."

Unlike van Gogh, who principally painted in oils, Kiefer uses many mediums, including traditional media like oil paint, watercolour and gouache, plus the unconventional application of materials like straw, ash or clay. Of van Gogh's 1890 *Wheatfield With Crows*, Kiefer writes, "The sky devours the painter, a sky that dissolves into infinity. It's not quite clear whether the all-dissolving brushstrokes capture the infinitely big or the infinitely small, the cosmos." Talking of the universe, Kiefer has also painted his own version of van Gogh's famous *The Starry Night* – complete with straw – (its vista heralding the exhibition's opening) his homage reflects the importance both artists put on exploring the conception of one's place within the world. A visceral response to van Gogh's original, the painting has swirling skies and earthly elements, all depicted in Kiefer's distinctive style.

"What really struck me whilst curating this show is, after talking about visual affinities, you realise that they're two artists deeply interested in literature," says Julien. "With reading books – as with looking at pictures – one must, without doubt, without hesitation, with assurance admire what is beautiful," said van Gogh. "He's probably the most well-read artist of the 19th century, something that may surprise," comments Julien, mentioning van Gogh's early, vivid painting of well-thumbed French novels on display. "And Kiefer," Julien adds, "is also somebody for whom the written word's incredibly important: poetry as well as philosophy, words are even present on the canvas, sometimes to enrich, sometimes to contribute meaning."

One of the main, obvious differences between the two artists is their chosen perspective: van Gogh's smaller canvases are often dwarfed by Kiefer's massive paintings but despite size anomaly, they work well in tandem, the right staging essential. "I think what's really important when you curate an exhibition is that you have to create a narrative that's compelling and then find a way to tell it in the spaces that you have," says Julien.

Two main spaces offer the ideal setting for the large Kiefer works, "almost like the galleries have been built for them." Within the smaller, more contemplative central gallery, lie the majority of van Gogh's canvases. Viewing Kiefer from this vantage point is perfect because perspective renders everything roughly the same scale. To retain this feeling of blending seamlessly, a single van Gogh painting appears in each larger gallery. "There's a wonderful moment, in the first room," says Julien, "where you have *The Pile of French Novels* next to the big landscapes, but if you put one of the novels into a landscape, it wouldn't look out of place." Likewise, in the final room, "one of my favourite paintings by van Gogh, the shoes of a peasant – a great piece hung close to the eight-metre wide field by Kiefer – almost looks like you could put the boots on and walk into the field; like an invitation." Both visually and conceptually arresting, the exhibition "has opened up a new window into Kiefer," for him.

Miguel Berger, German Ambassador to the UK agrees. "By placing Kiefer's lifelong conversation with the work of Vincent van Gogh centre stage, the show – through its juxtaposition with van Gogh's masterpieces – brings to the fore what Anselm Kiefer stands for: he's an astute chronicler of post-war Germany, but also of our times, who powerfully captures and challenges notions of identity, history and collective memory in breathtaking images." ***royalacademy.org.uk***

Kiefer/ Van Gogh runs until 26 October 2025 at The Gabrielle Jungels-Winkler Galleries: Burlington Gardens, Royal Academy, London □

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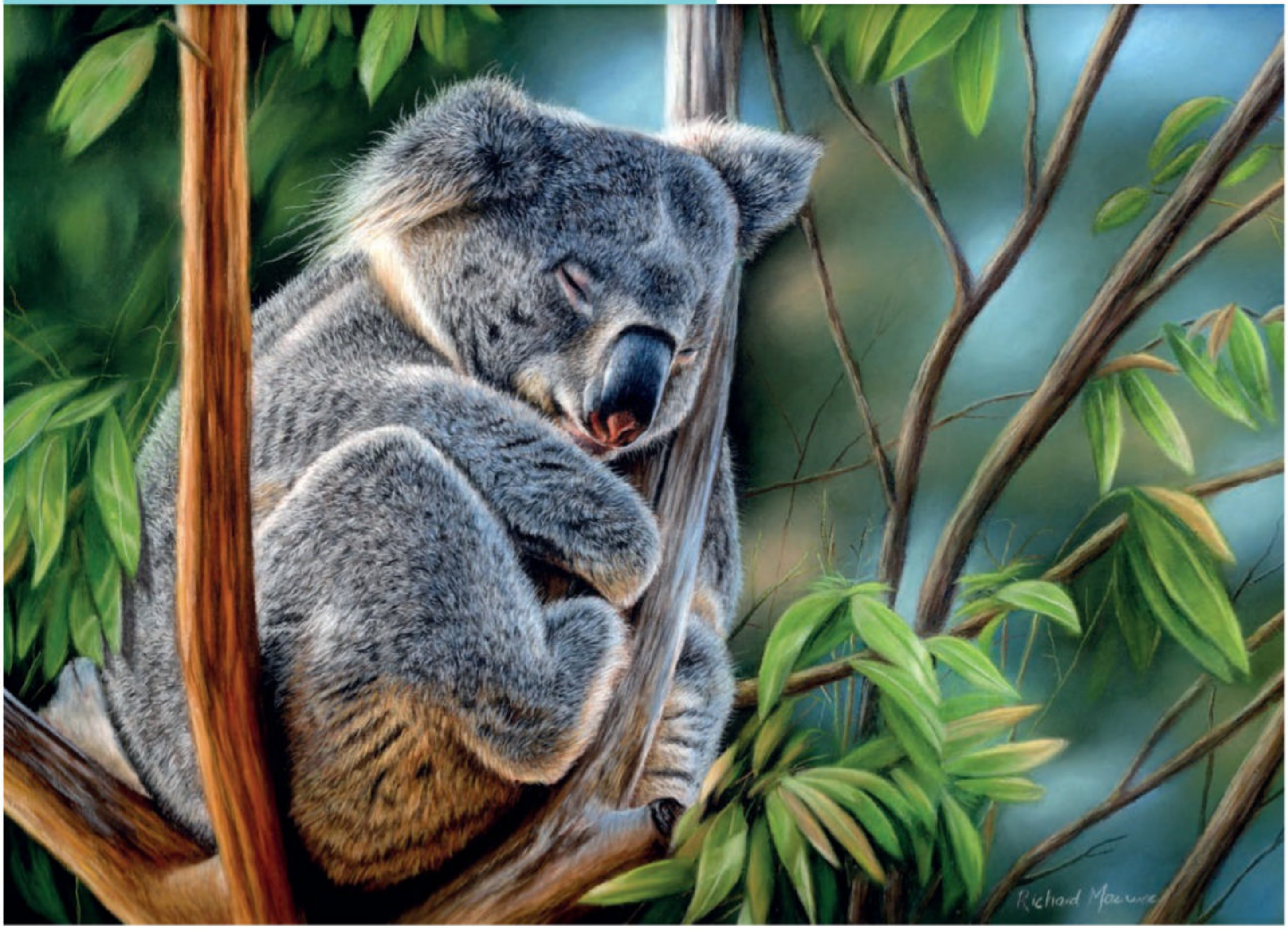
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO PAINT AND CREATE

RICHARD MACWEE is a professional wildlife artist and illustrator. Working in soft pastels, oils and graphite pencil, he captures animals in fine detail, often using his work to raise awareness of conservation and animal welfare. Here, he shares his advice on using soft pastels and building a sustainable creative practice



A QUIET MOMENT, SOFT PASTELS, 40X30CM

1

Experiment with toned pastel papers. Using a mid-toned paper removes the intimidating white background and creates a nice base colour for your artwork. You can choose a toned paper that will unify and harmonise with your pastel colours. Alternatively, you can select a toned paper that will contrast with the pastel colours. A neutral mid-tone paper is a good starting point.

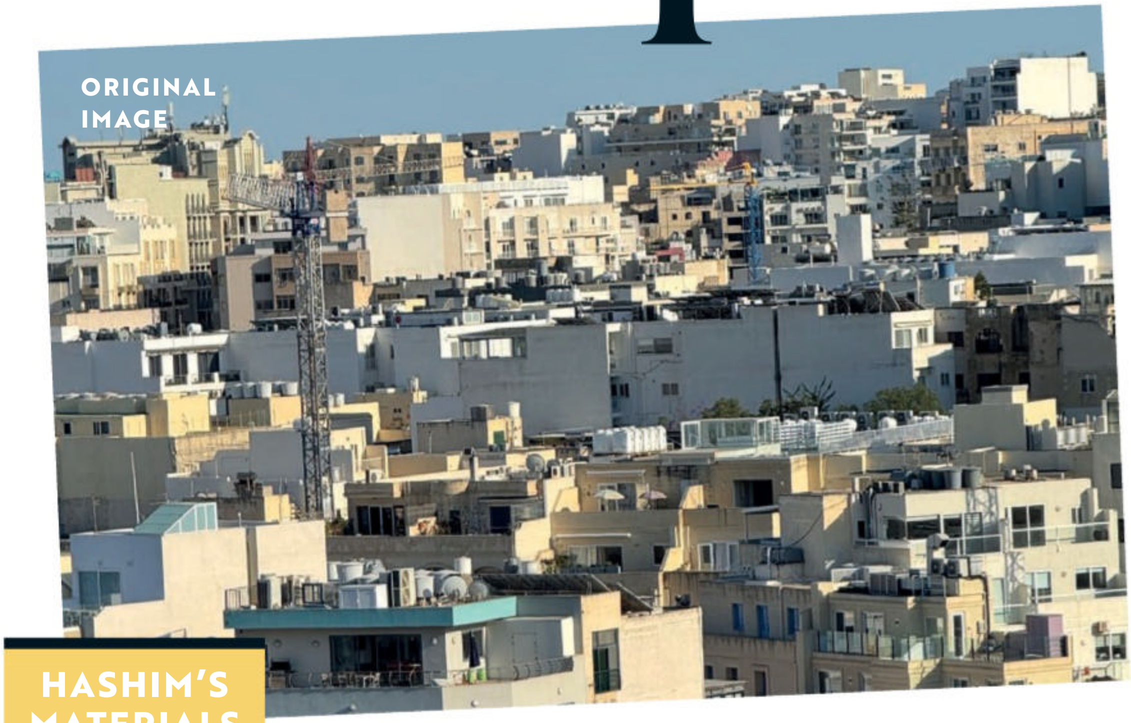
2

Soft pastel sticks are great for laying down large areas of colour, especially in the background. But for achieving fine detail, pastel pencils are very useful, particularly for wildlife art. Depicting whiskers and fur is much easier with the fine point of pastel pencils. Build up colour intensity by adding multiple layers of pastel. But be careful not to over blend as the colours can look muddy.

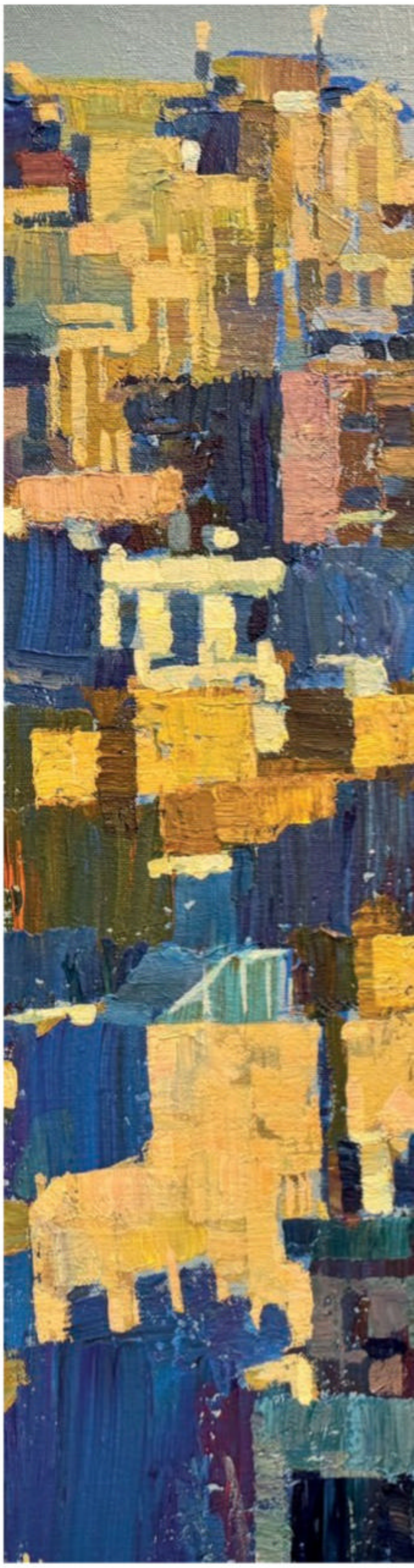
3

Self-promotion and marketing are essential skills for a professional artist. Your artwork won't reach its audience otherwise. Post regularly to social media and reply to comments. Build an audience for your art. Engage with potential buyers and other artists. Consider starting an email list on your website. And keep creating.
richardmacwee.com □

Sculpture



ORIGINAL IMAGE



HASHIM'S MATERIALS

Paint
Liquitex and Vallejo Heavy Body Acrylics: Unbleached Titanium, Yellow Ochre, Lemon Yellow, Cadmium Orange, Magenta, Red Oxide, Sap Green, Phthalo Green, Teal, Cyan Blue, Cobalt Blue, Phthalo Blue, Permanent Blue Violet, Prussian Blue, Titanium White

Brushes
Brushes: Daler Rowney System 3 Sky Flow Flat Head 2, 11/2, 1, 3/4inch

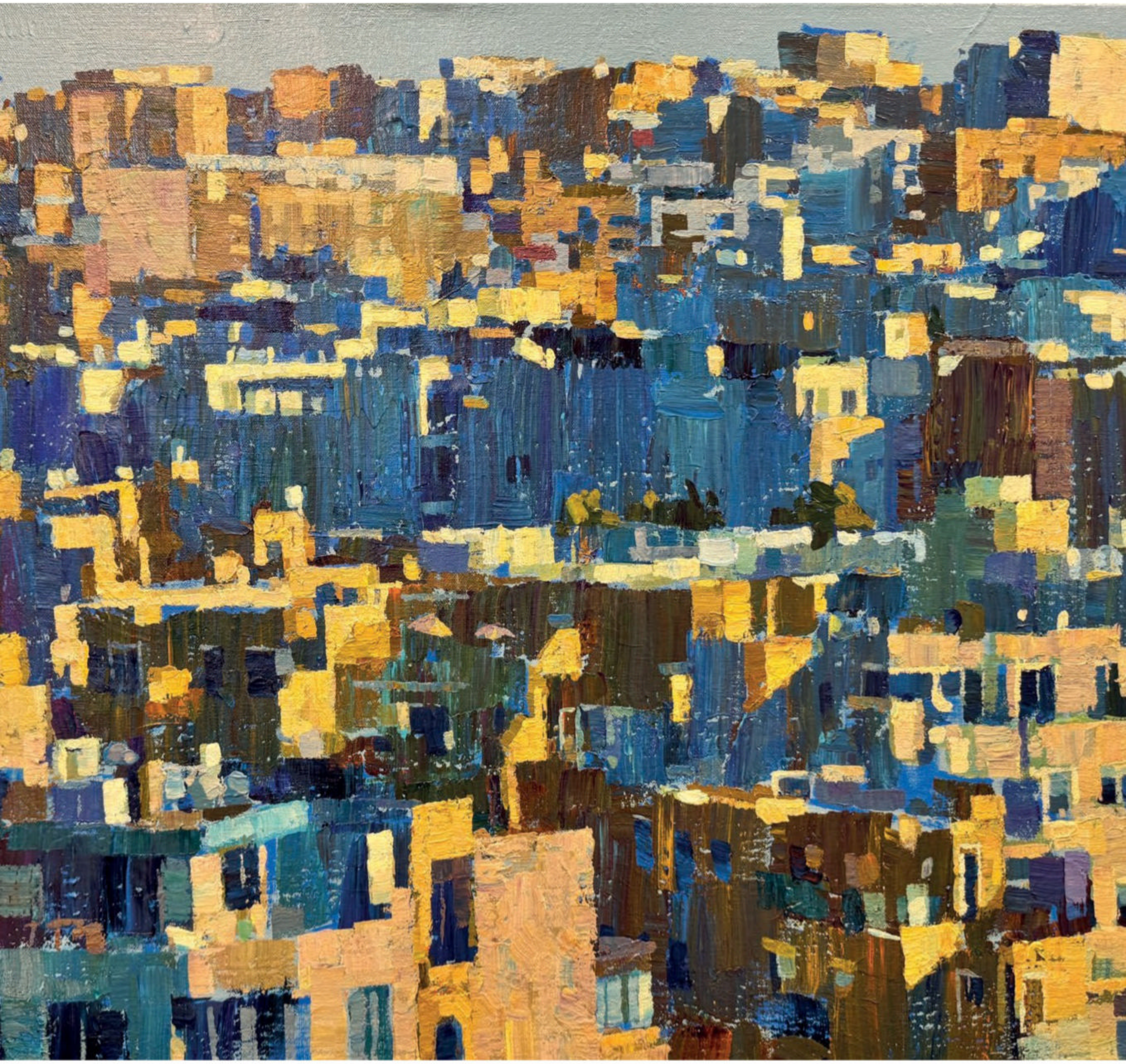
Support
Pot of water, mixing tray, 60x80-inch canvas

I have always enjoyed painting street scenes and would mimic some of my favourite artists who painted this subject matter. I'd see how they dealt with figures, the play of light, busy traffic or if every door or window was included. I wanted to paint something but using my own unique take. I remember an interview with a well-known musician who said he went to Africa to learn to play African drums in order to add a new sound to his recognisable recordings. At the time I thought this could be an interesting idea which might be adapted to my own painting process. I began thinking of other forms of art, such as sculpture and collage. I particularly liked the French sculptor Auguste Rodin whose finely realised figures contained coarse, almost unfinished, expressive marks but still kept the precision of the form. Heads and figures would emerge from blocks of stone creating a palpable feeling of order and chaos. Most sculptures I'd seen before were very classically refined and polished. This made me think about the weights of the paint, the thicker the better, as I could replicate this feeling of expression by applying layers of impasto paint or using modelling paste to create a textured surface. I could also incorporate this sense of order and chaos by freeing up initially leaving refinements till the latter stages. Even then, the sculpting took another turn when I began working with flathead brushes which leaves a very pronounced brushstroke like a wood carver's chisel. It appealed on many levels primarily as applications worked better as dabs side by side rather than blended.

These sunlit Mediterranean rooftops create a complicated scene to paint. So, if you're eager to give it a try, perhaps choose a simpler composition or just attempt a small section of the scene. Avoid thinking you're painting buildings; instead look at the interesting patterns, shapes and colours while avoiding tidying up edges till the end, even then underplay them. Through this step-by-step, I'll also concentrate mainly on the buildup of the painting as this contains most of the sculptural ideas behind it. The latter stages are more deliberate, focused mark-making.
hashimakib.co.uk ▶

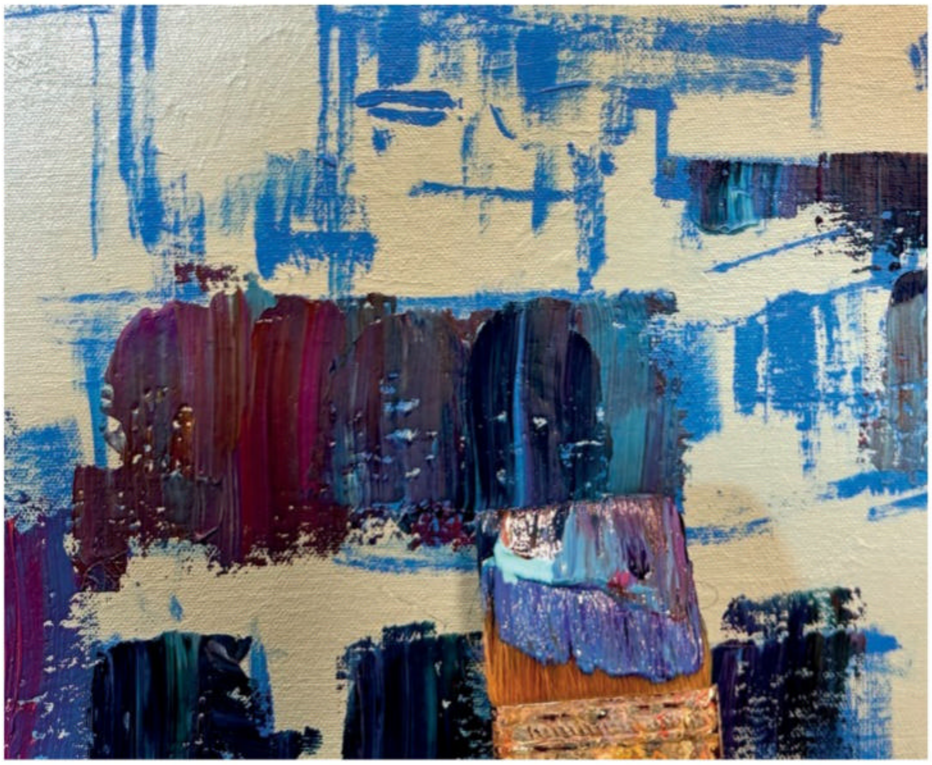
vulture

In the third of a six-part series, **HASHIM AKIB** encourages you to think sculpturally when working with acrylic



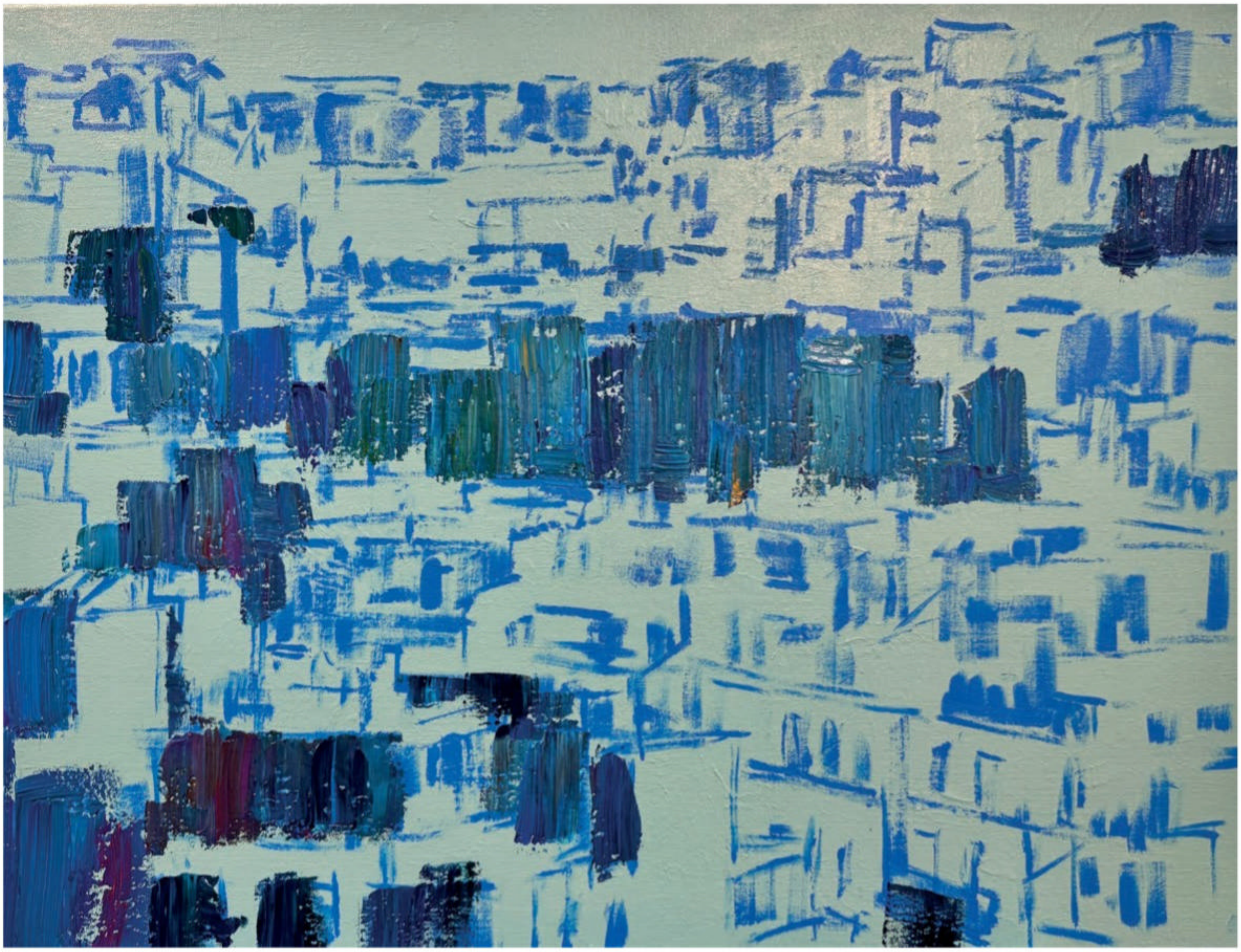
1 START WITH THE BASE ▶

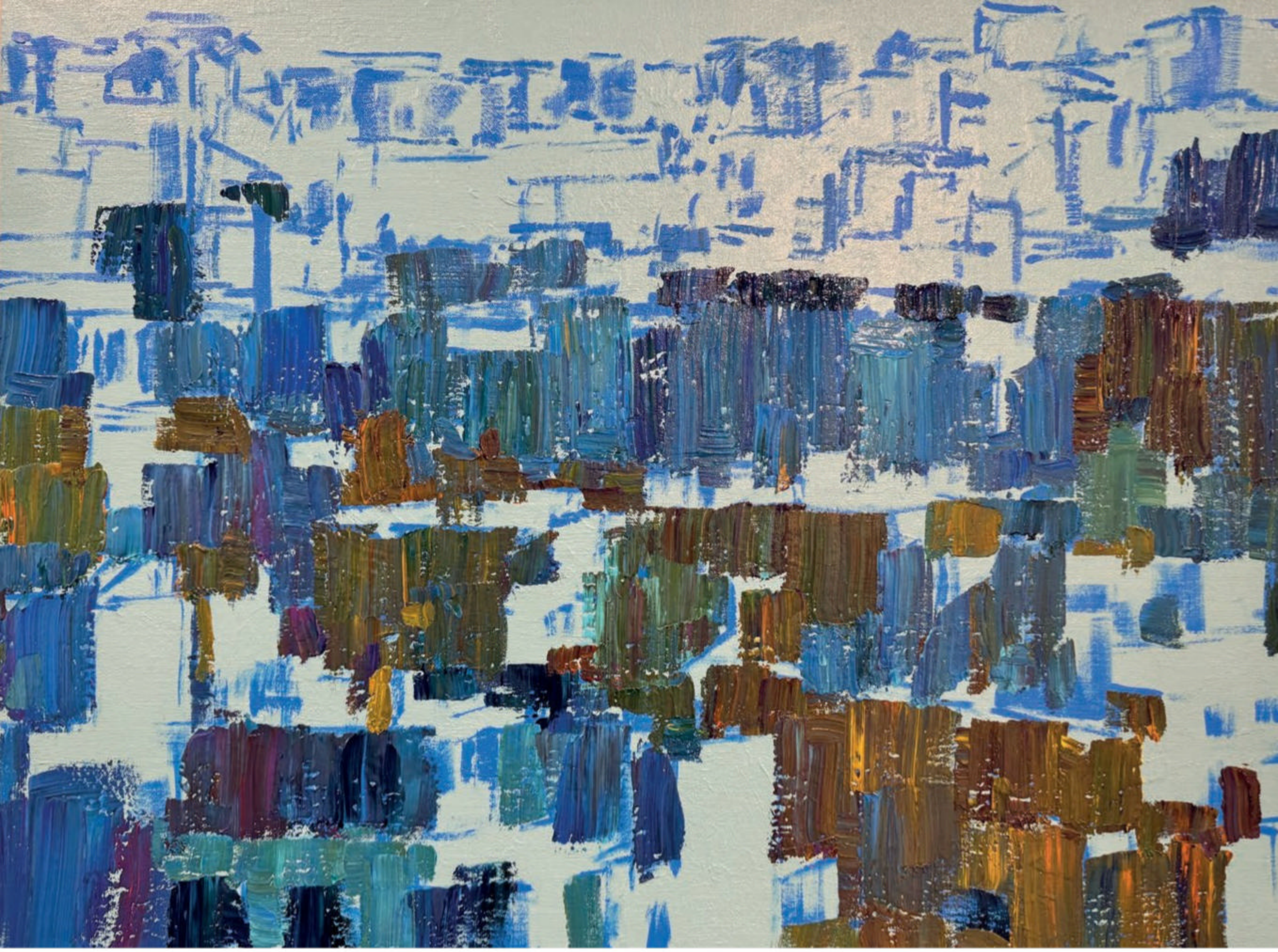
I begin as with most paintings with a base colour. I mix Cyan Blue/ Ochre with plenty of White. On this occasion I've spent a bit of time on the drawing, using a small flat brush with Cyan, to get to know the scene. With the idea of sculpture in mind, I begin with a moist 2-inch flat brush with plenty of paint. On my plastic mixing tray, I create a range of cool blues mixed with Magenta and violet, including small amounts of Ochre and Red Oxide. The pigment is under mixed leaving a streaky look to the initial applications.

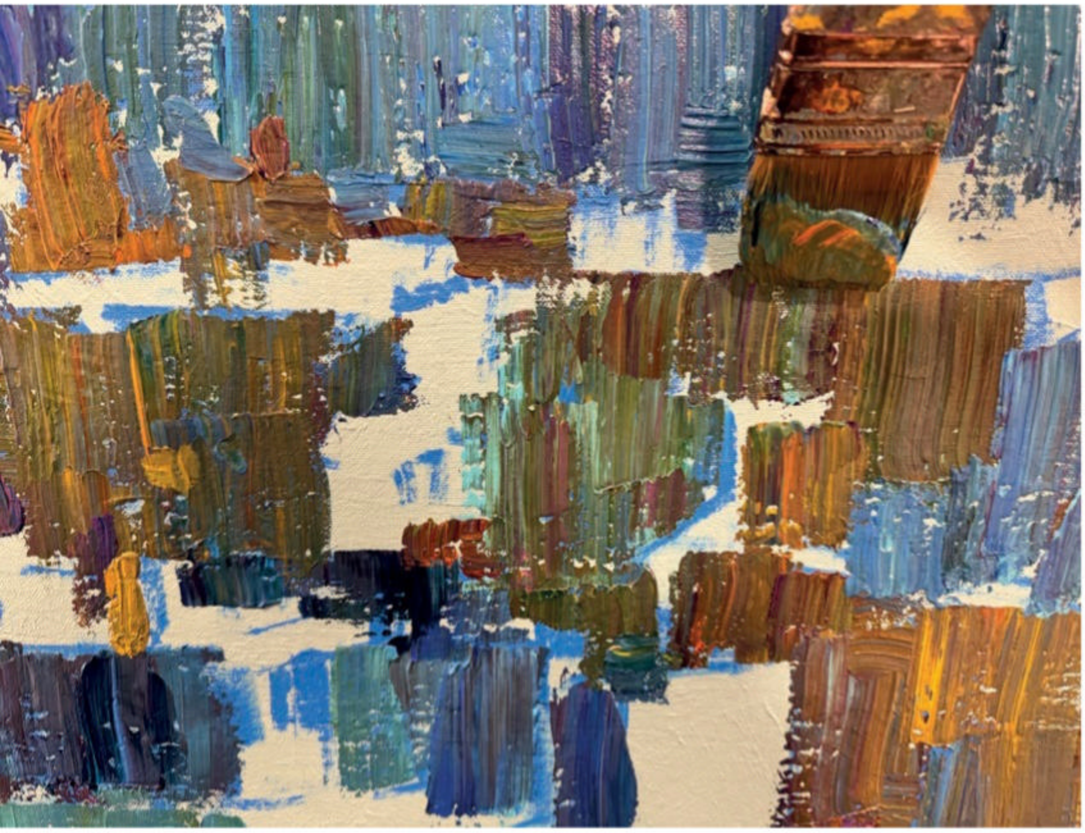


2 LAY OFF THE WHITE ▼

I decide to concentrate on shaded areas of the scene first as these are large spaces. The thickness of the heavy acrylic leaves consistent downward impasto marks. These are relatively large expressive strokes carving out shapes. The streaky applications vary slightly in colour as I move around the scene to create irregularities. I use mainly Blues but incorporate Greens, Teal, Ochre and Violet. Very little White if any is used in these mixes as this will de-saturate colour leaving mainly underwhelming tints.





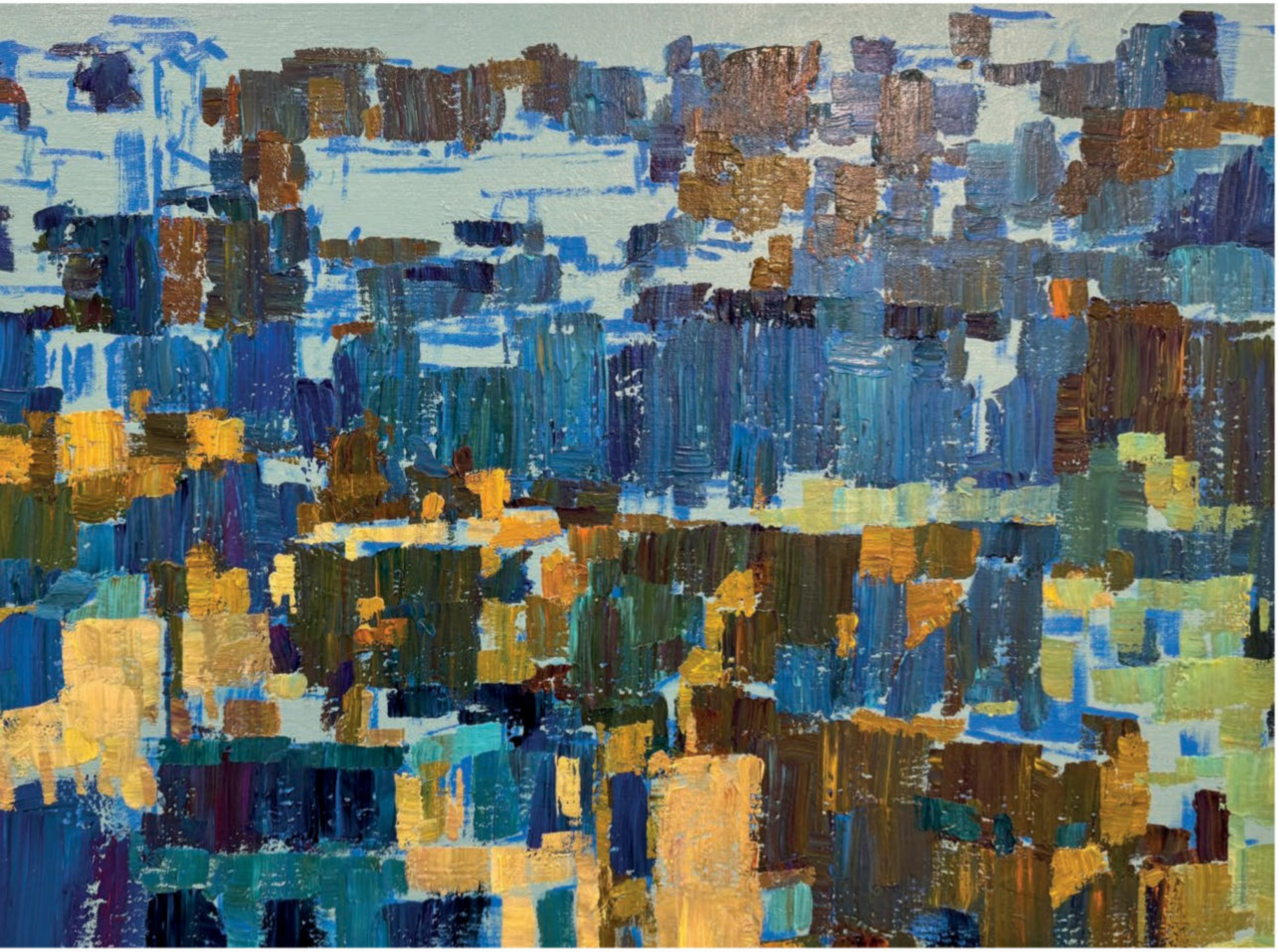


3 WHY WE USE PURE ACRYLIC ▲

The advantages of neat acrylic applications are numerous. Colours are richer, there's more of a shine or lustre to the finish, while some parts of the painting won't require any additional layers. I use a clean 2-inch to begin employing warmer colours made by mixing Orange, Violet, Ochre and Cadmium Yellow along with some cool colours still workable on my mixing tray. I deliberately have some purer streaks of colour to subtly accentuate marks. Previous layers are still fresh, but I avoid too much interaction with these and the new colour.

◀ 4 THINK COLLAGE

This close-up provides a good indication of the variety of pigments involved and sculpted nature. I also utilise collage techniques at this stage by placing contrasting blocks of colour next to each other. No blending is used to polish edges as each mark is applied in one or two applications providing a definitive statement. Even though I'm painting rooftops, this process does allow me to access a more abstracted view of the image rather than architectural.

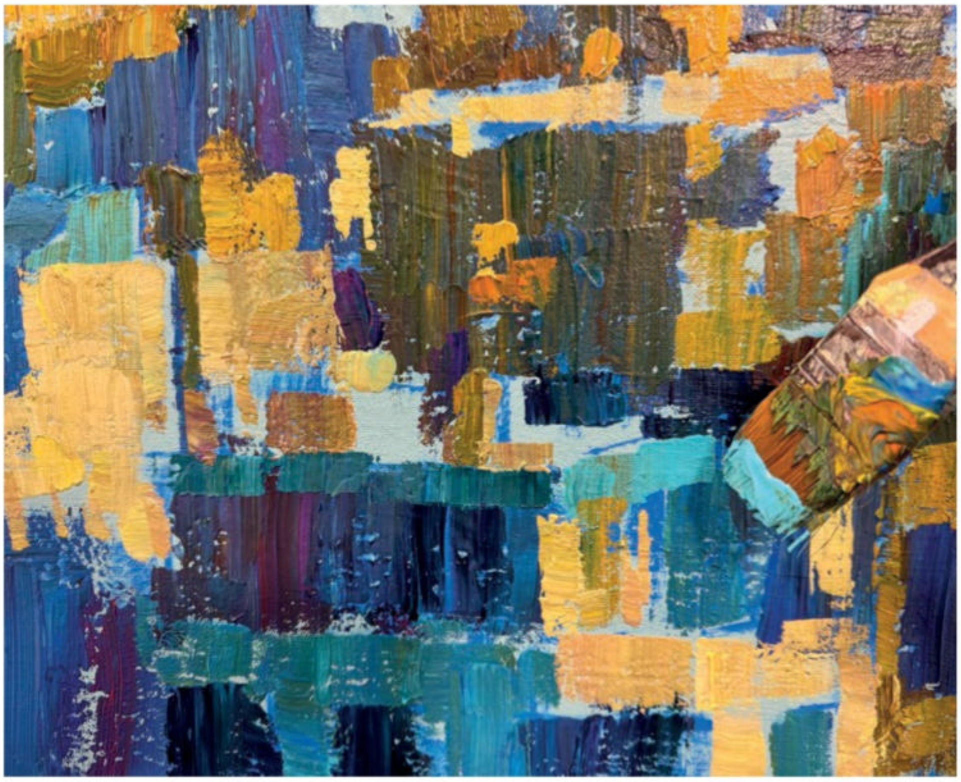


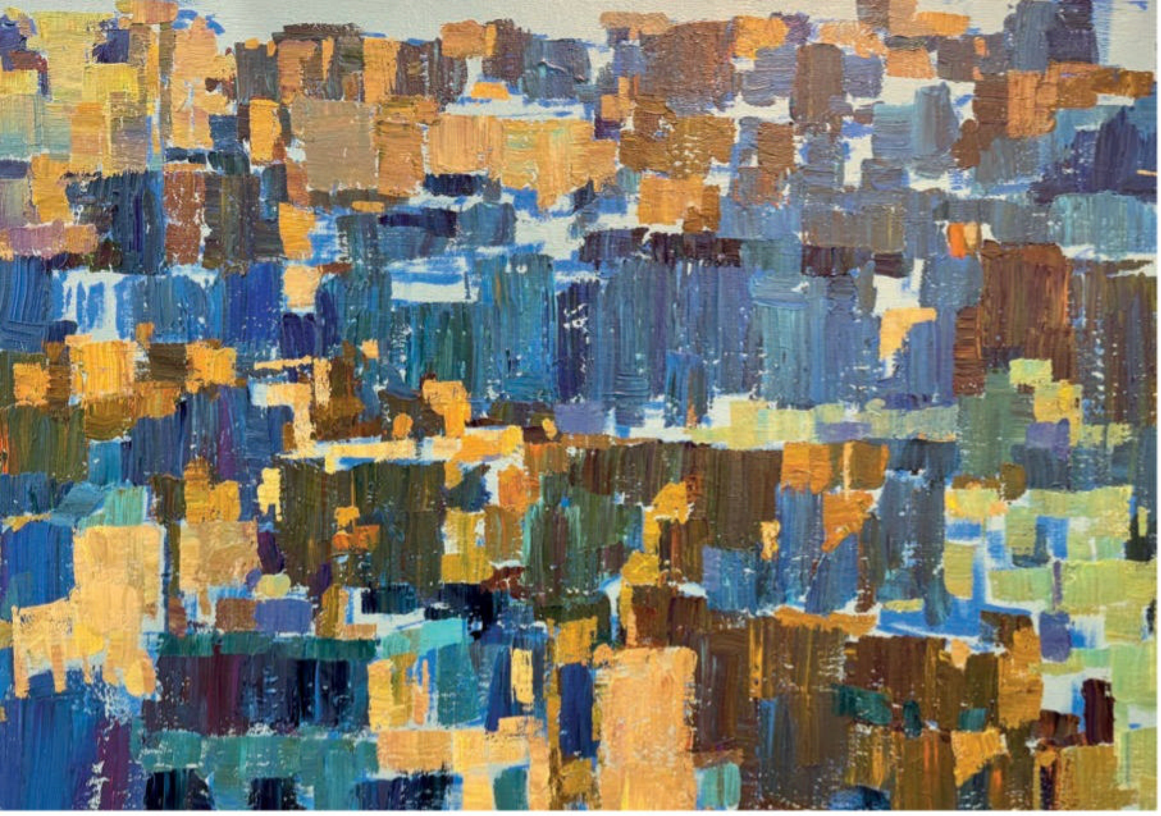
5 DON'T BE TOO NEAT ▲

As the overall scene begins taking shape, I'm careful not to include too much precision in the lines of the buildings, even sabotaging some with a loose grip to create crackly edges. This is another advantage to thick applications leaving a distressed surface for uneven, interesting lines. For the sunlit parts of the buildings, I add small amounts of Unbleached Titanium mixed with Yellows, Orange and Violet. These are mainly applied with a 2-inch with some smaller marks using a 1 1/2-inch flat.

6 LEAVE ANYTHING YOU MIGHT THINK IS UNFINISHED ▶

Having applied the initial larger strokes you'll notice lots of unrefined jagged edges and even pockets of the base colour coming through. It's essential to leave some of these undeveloped features to sit alongside the upcoming refinements. This will create more potency for your points of interest by heightening the differences. When introducing these tints look for a bias towards colour before dominating with plenty of white.





◀

7

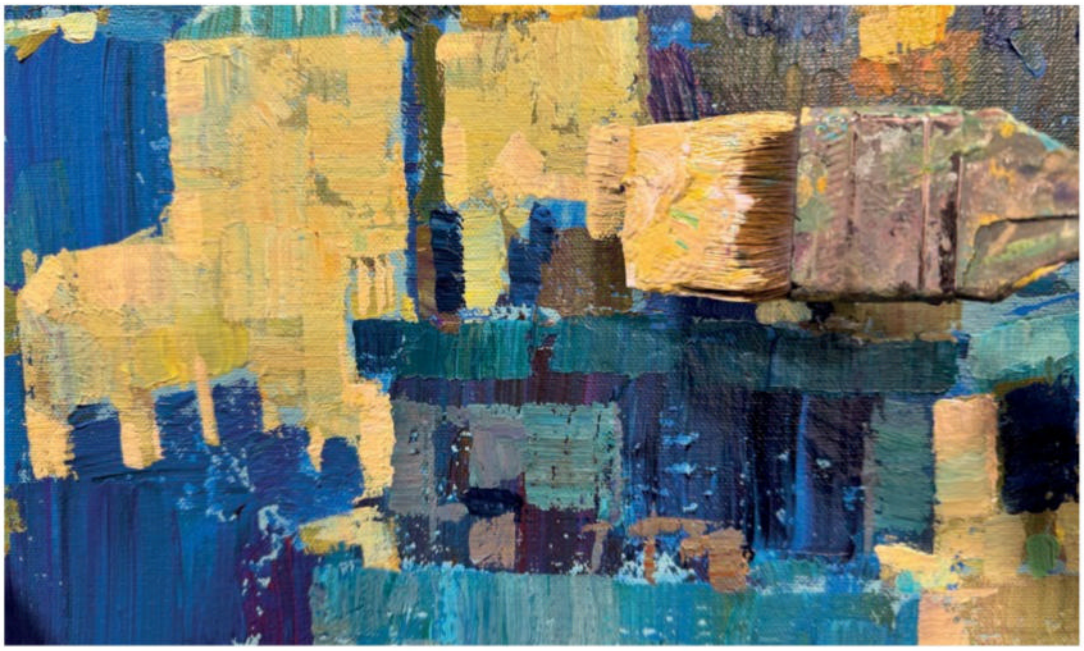
KEEP CAUTIOUS

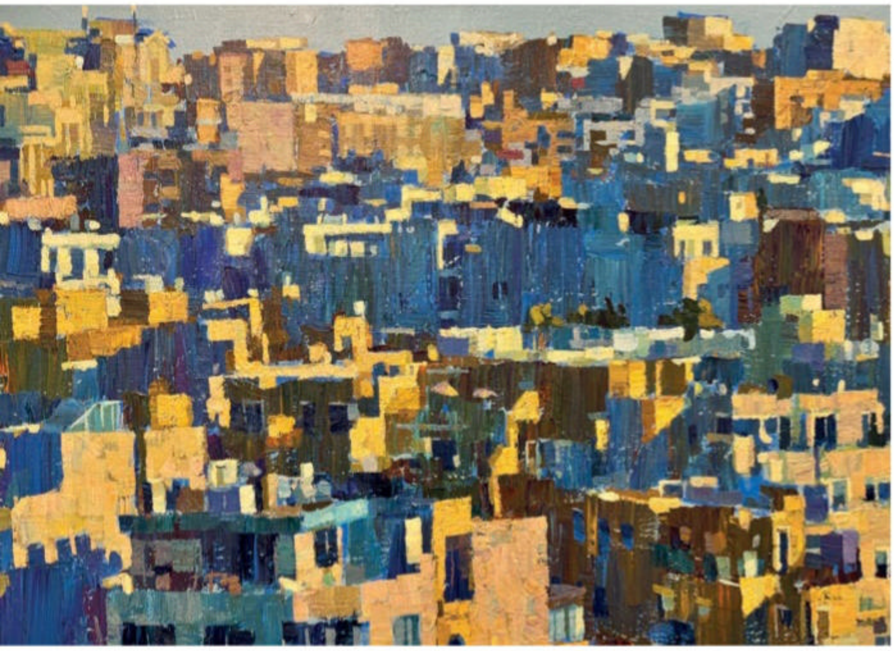
At this stage things are coming together, and I can see the potential of the scene. These tend to be cautious stages, the enthusiasm of the first flurries makes way for thoughtful refinements. Maintaining concentration and focus can be tricky, so hold the goal firmly in mind of a more sculpted, collage of colour idea as the main foundation. Take breaks when you need to as the last stages are the long haul.

8

REMEMBER DARKS DRY DARKER ▶

Still working with largish flat brushes, I make a start on crisping up forms and light. A flat brush naturally provides distinct marks similar to chisels which helps avoid polishing, which happens readily with a round head. As acrylic dries darker, go a little stronger with light or colour than you think you need; darks will take care of themselves. If anything go a little lighter or cooler with these. As you can see just pronounce the light which makes sure the mark is prominent but as it dries the strength will subside.



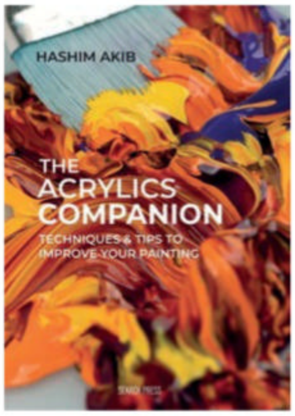


◀

9

DEFINE AND REFINE

This took time and care with lots of observation. I added more White to my Yellowish tints towards the end, enhancing certain light areas to maximise the potency. I use a 1-inch flat and smaller. I also spent some time sealing up a few crackly areas of Blue to tighten up the forms. There are still vast sections of the painting which are the base applications I began with.



Hashim's new book, *The Acrylic Companion*, published by Search Press, is available now from all good book retailers ◻

PIMM'S No1 PIMM'S

Pimm's o'clock

California-based artist **KATIE JACOBSON** centres her work on the essence of life around her. Here, she decorates a bottle of Pimm's with the colourful garnishes that make it such a summery drink

KATIE'S MATERIALS

Pencils
Prismacolor Premier Coloured Pencils

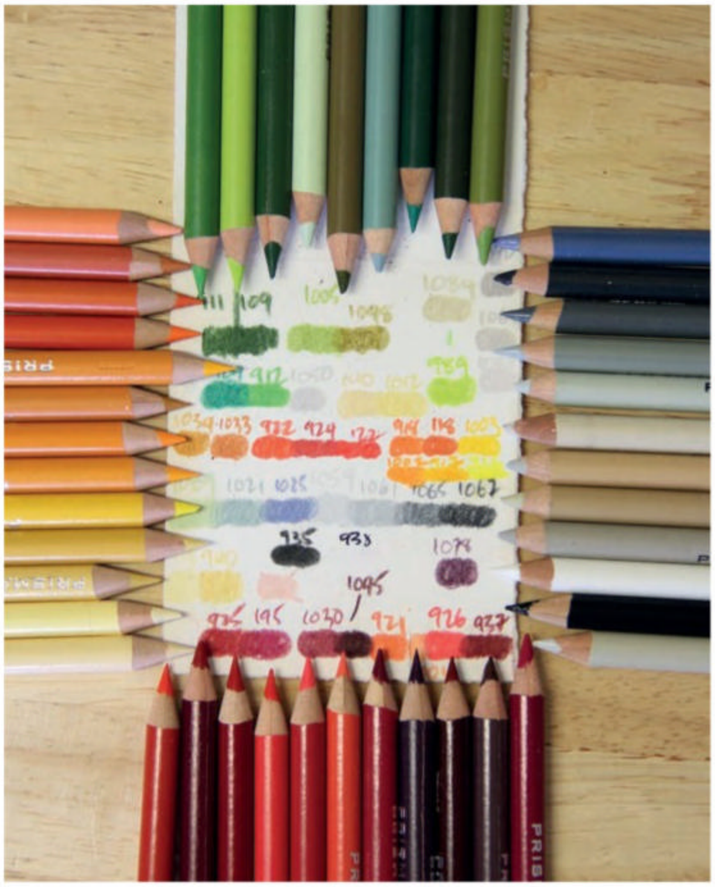
Support
Arches 140lb Hot Pressed Watercolour Paper
Faber-Castell Kneaded Eraser
Ticonderoga #2 Graphite Pencil for sketching

BACK IN 2014, I EMBARKED ON A CREATIVE JOURNEY, taking some introductory classes on Prismacolor pencols and also charcoal. However, life happened, and I found myself taking a hiatus from serious drawing until 2020. Consequently, my artwork has resulted in personal trial and error. I share this to provide context, as my approach might seem a little unconventional.

For me, the most challenging part of the creative process is always the genesis of an idea. Once inspiration strikes though, I cannot rest until I've translated it onto paper. This particular piece is my interpretation of the quintessential summer flavour: the classic Pimm's.

I chose to primarily celebrate the garnishes, as they elevate the Pimm's experience and deserve their moment in the spotlight. There's something about this lively and colourful piece that almost lets you taste the summer; it makes my heart happy every time I look at it. Prismacolor pencils can be finicky and utterly unforgiving, but I believe the final result is always worth the effort. This piece took a total of 32 hours to complete, with a few tea breaks scattered in between.

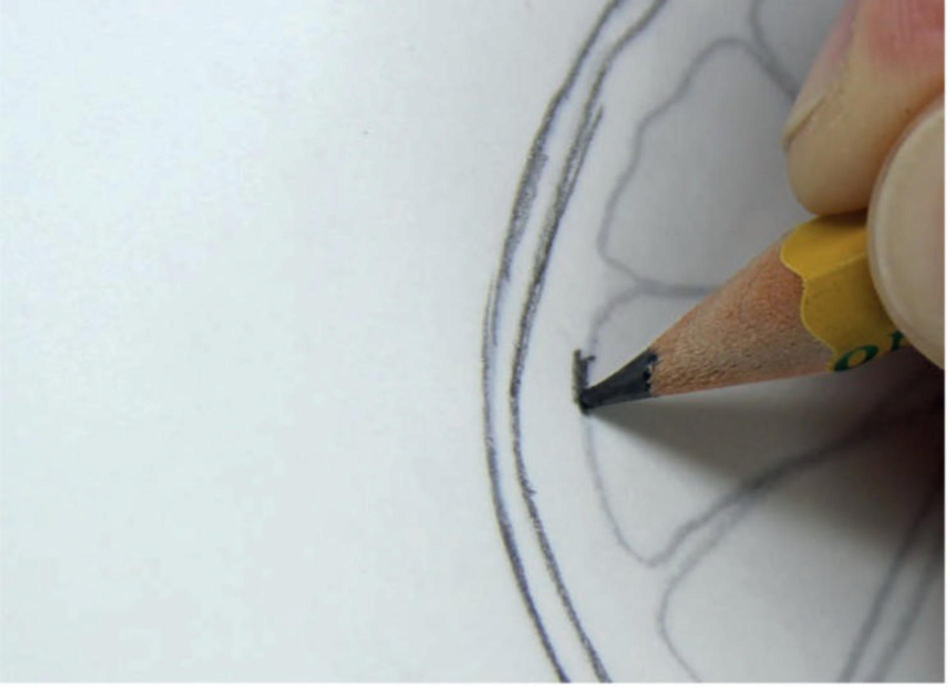
katiejartwork.com



1 PROPER PREPARATION

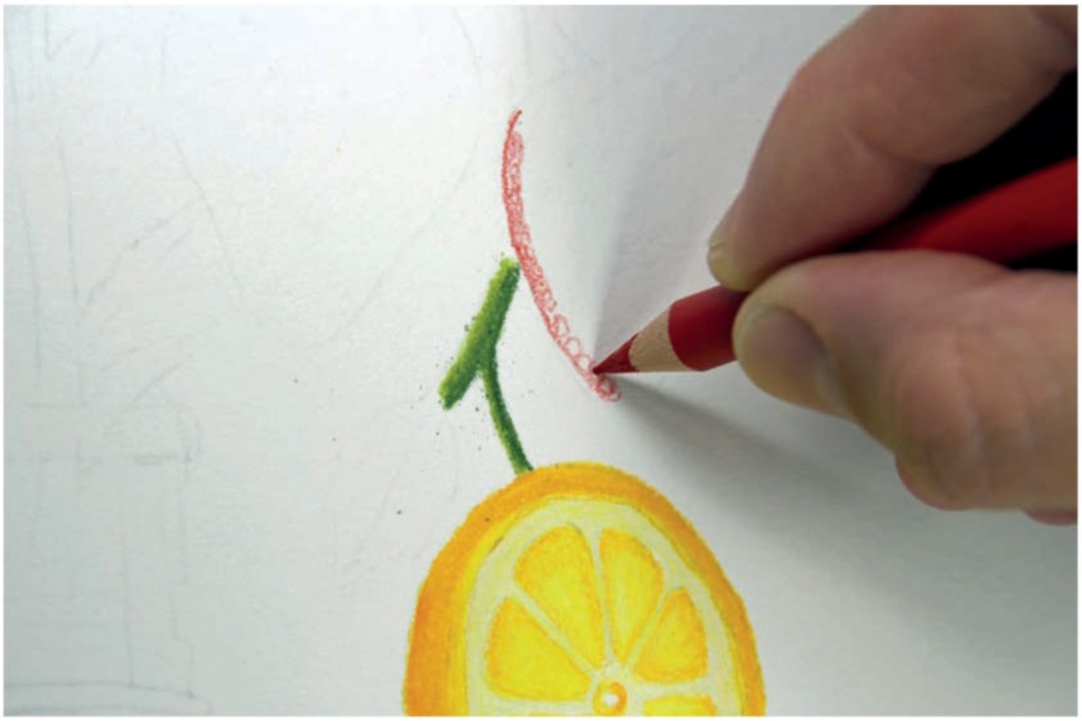
Utilise your reference photos, and take your time to choose the most suitable hues, as this will make for an uninterrupted drawing workflow. A tip is to keep your pencils super sharp. They make blending a breeze and will elevate the overall quality of your artwork. So, don't forget to give your pencils a good sharpening before you start, and don't stop until you've finished. ▸

STEP-BY-STEP



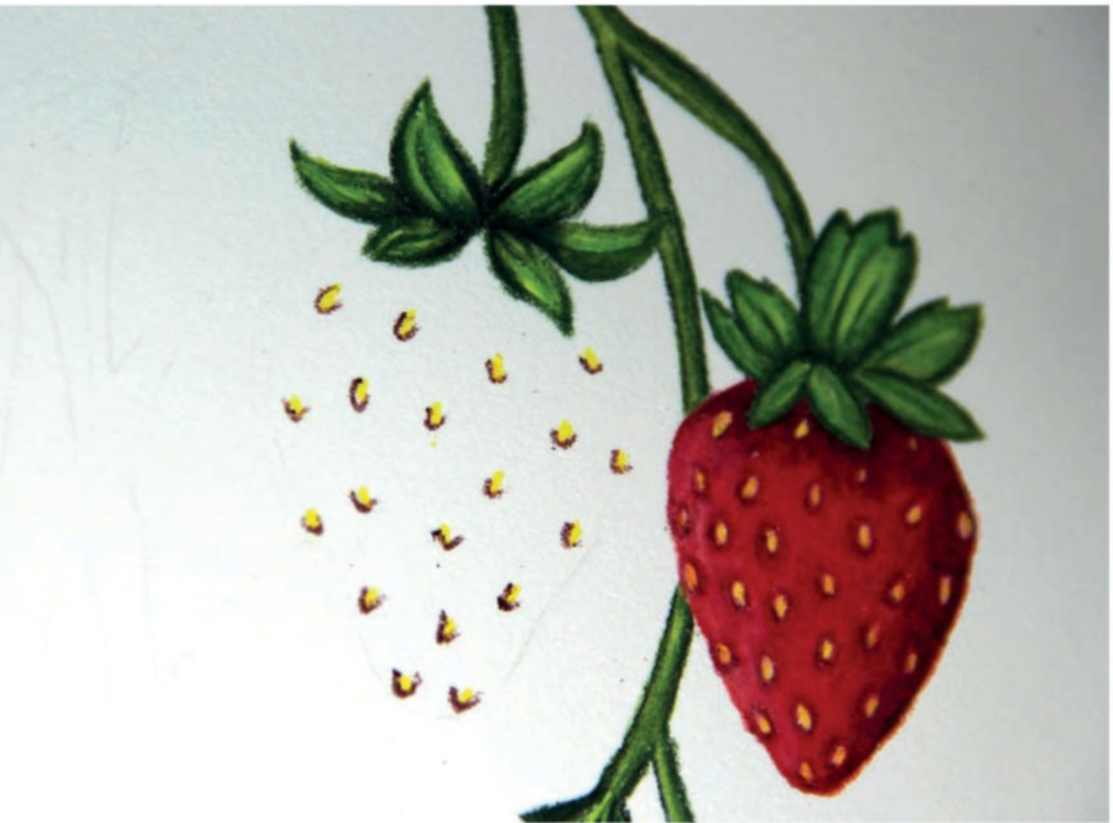
2 SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS ▶

This drawing technique demands the utmost precision. While some artists might use a projector for this step, I prefer the tactile approach of tracing paper to achieve the most accurate outline. There's something satisfying about this old-school method that resonates with my artistic sensibilities. Once the outline is near perfect, you can then sketch in the finer details where you see fit. Keep in mind, that it's almost impossible to erase these pencils, so having a solid starting point is critical.



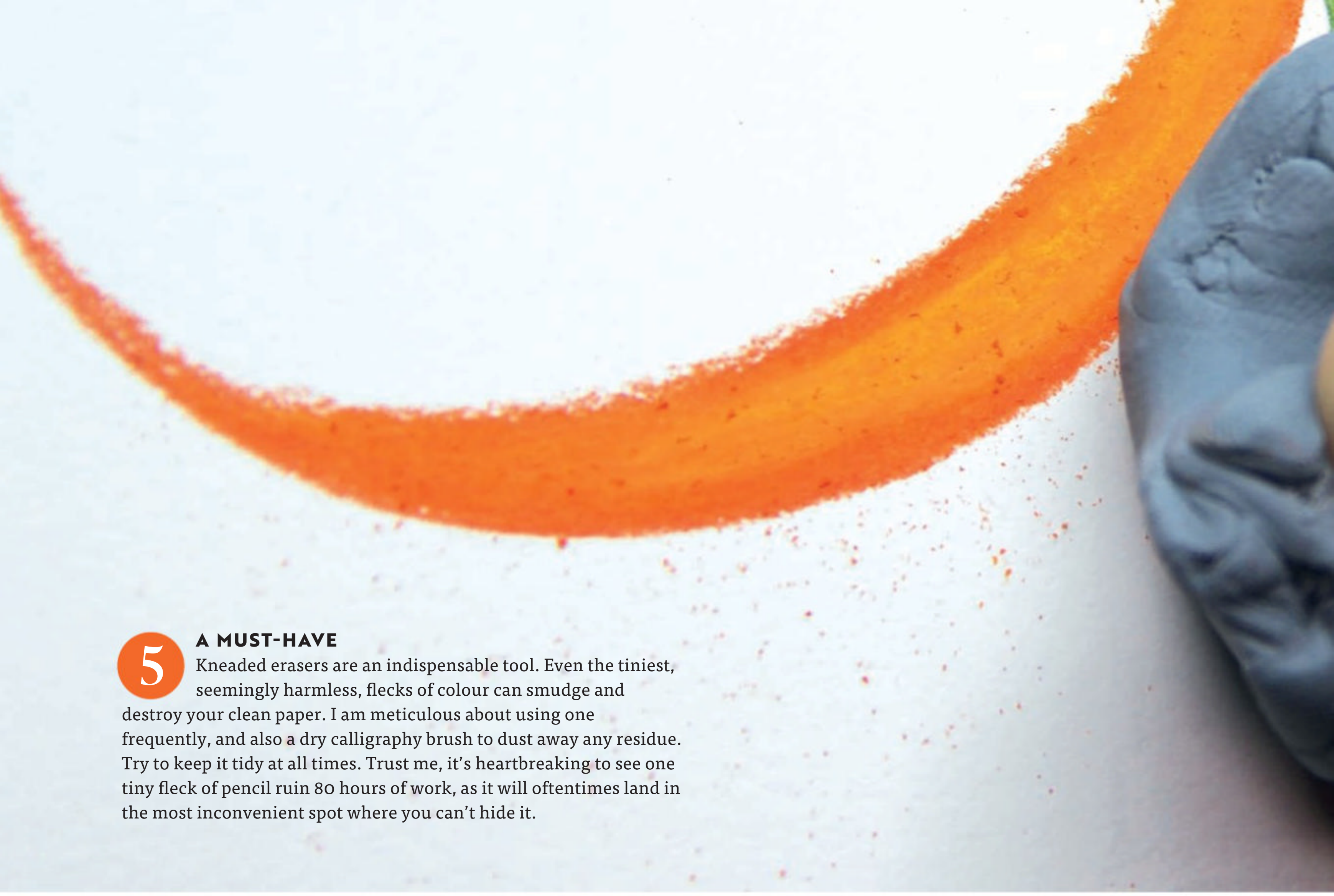
◀ 3 PATIENCE IS KEY

I prefer to tackle what I believe to be the most difficult element first. In this case, it was the lemon, as I find yellows to be the most challenging to work with. Next, I begin the strawberry, working in a circular motion whenever possible. Try to avoid scribbling or creating heavy lines, unless the design calls for them, as these techniques can hinder your progress. Patience is crucial, even when you're eager to complete the piece.



4 VIBRANT FRUIT ▶

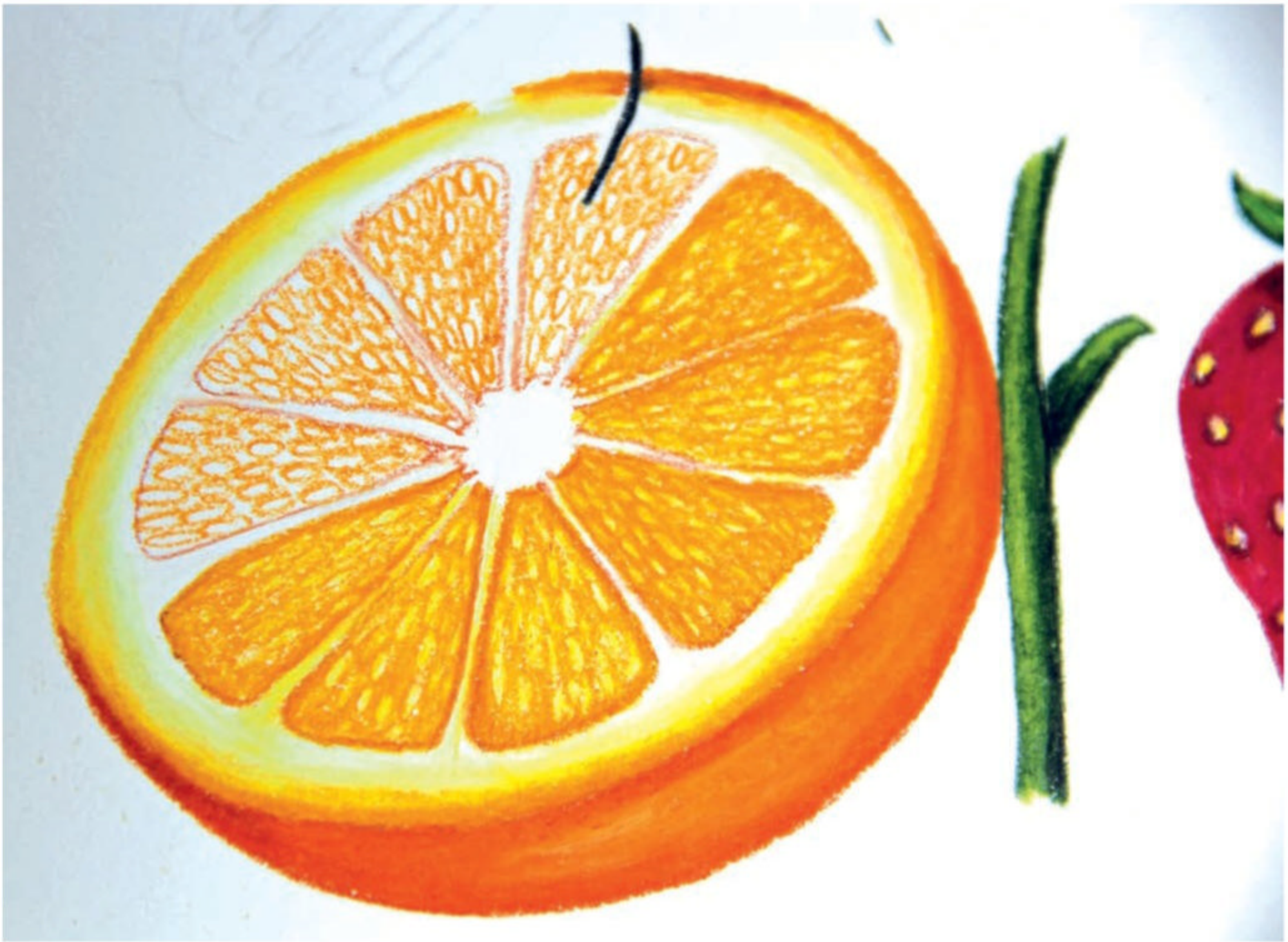
For the strawberries, I start by creating highlights from the seeds outward, building up layers to enhance vibrancy and dimension. With wax-based pencils like these, layering is key; don't be shy about building up the colour. For those inevitable moments when the doubt creeps in, I keep a scrap of paper nearby to blend and test different hues, making sure they work harmoniously before committing to the final piece.



5

A MUST-HAVE

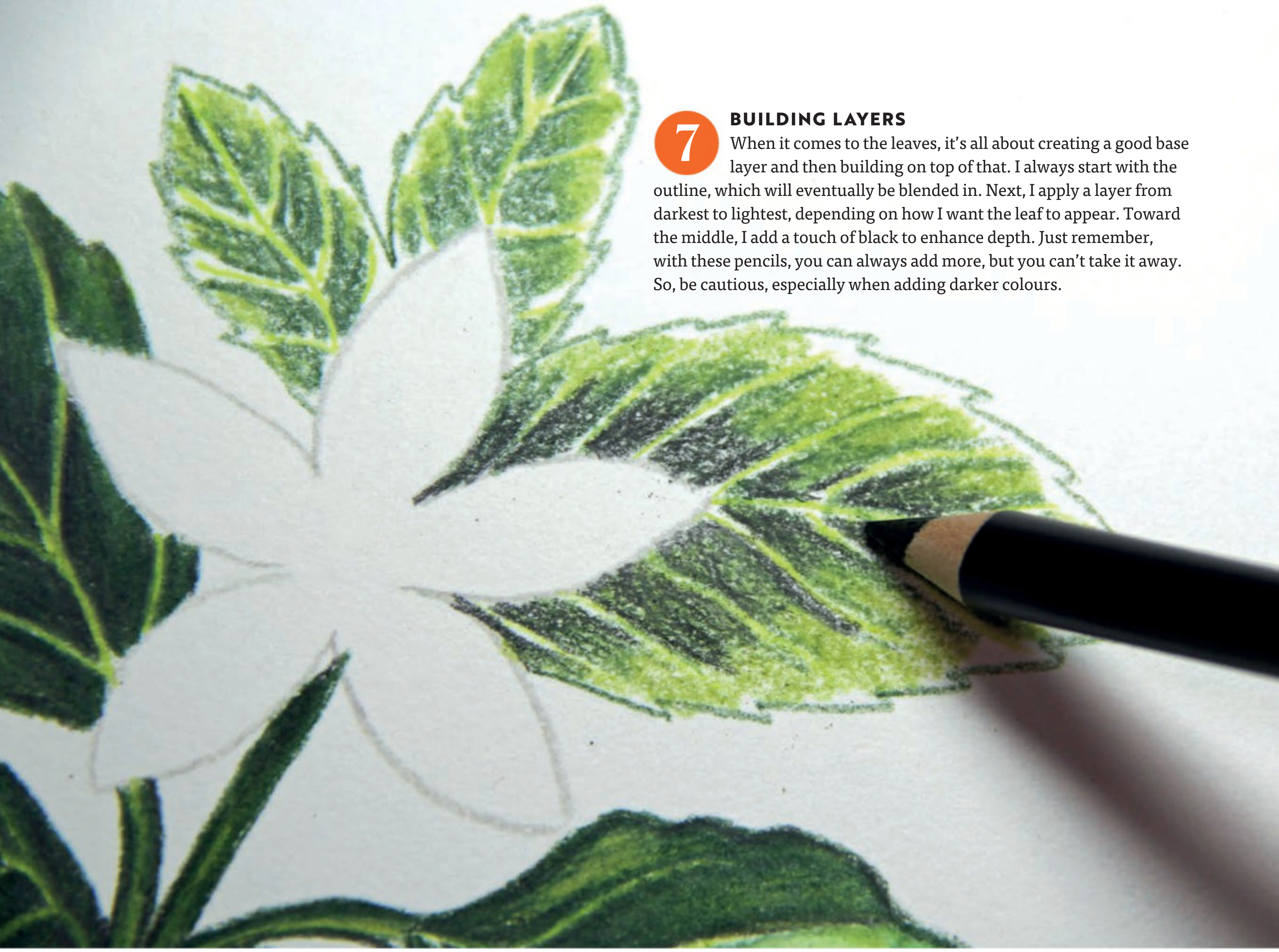
Kneaded erasers are an indispensable tool. Even the tiniest, seemingly harmless, flecks of colour can smudge and destroy your clean paper. I am meticulous about using one frequently, and also a dry calligraphy brush to dust away any residue. Try to keep it tidy at all times. Trust me, it's heartbreaking to see one tiny fleck of pencil ruin 80 hours of work, as it will oftentimes land in the most inconvenient spot where you can't hide it.



6

CITRUS DETAILS

The orange rind is the ideal place to use those bold, harsh lines for added definition. Begin by sketching the circles for each segment, then layer in highlights and blend as you go. For each segment, I combined four different orange and yellow shades. Darker hues like Goldenrod and Mineral Orange work wonders for adding those edge accents to both the orange and lemon, enhancing the overall depth and definition.

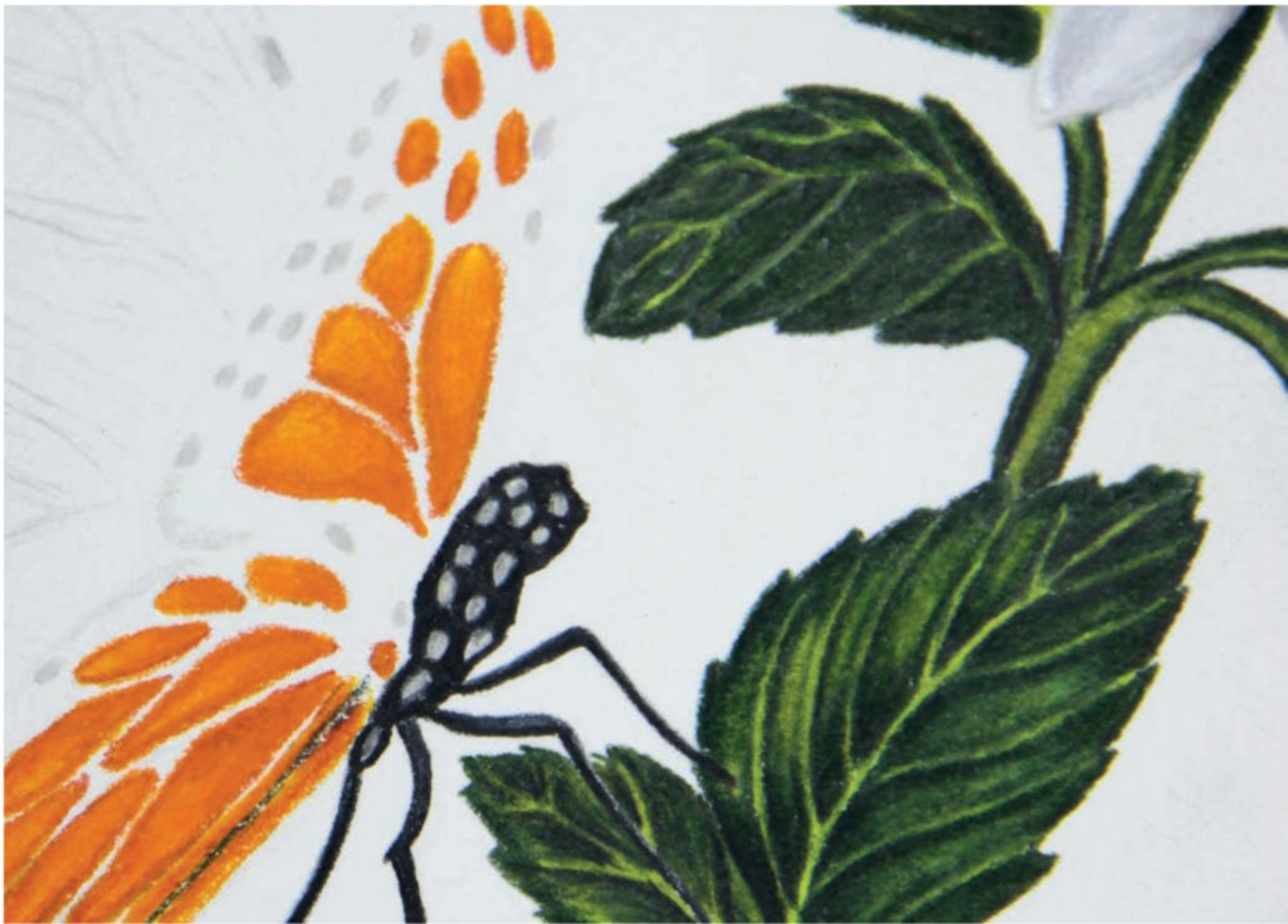


7 BUILDING LAYERS

When it comes to the leaves, it's all about creating a good base layer and then building on top of that. I always start with the outline, which will eventually be blended in. Next, I apply a layer from darkest to lightest, depending on how I want the leaf to appear. Toward the middle, I add a touch of black to enhance depth. Just remember, with these pencils, you can always add more, but you can't take it away. So, be cautious, especially when adding darker colours.

8 FRAME THE COLOUR

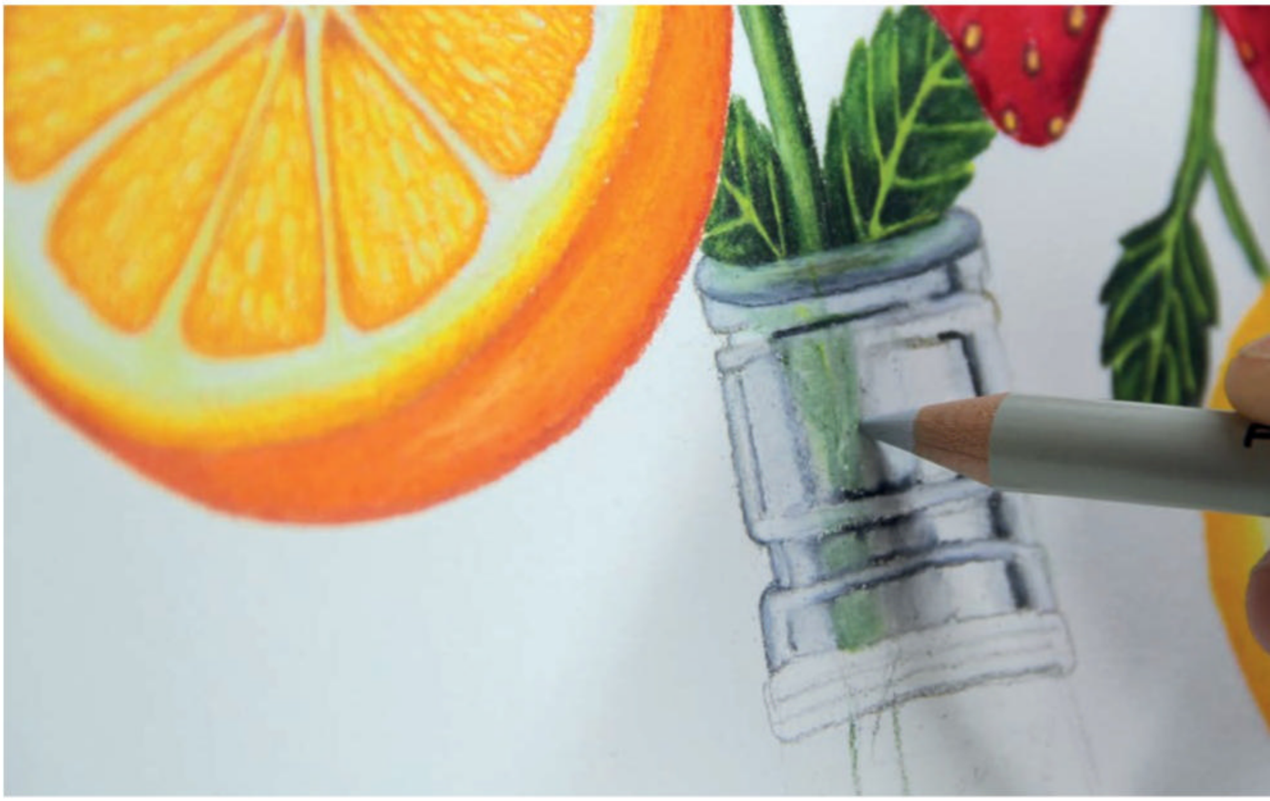
For the butterfly wings, I worked from darkest to lightest again, much like the leaves. Start with the coloured spots, and then you can add the black around those later. This way, you'll find the black creates a nice, clean, frame around the orange and white. Also, add some cool grey to the top of the butterfly's legs as a highlight.

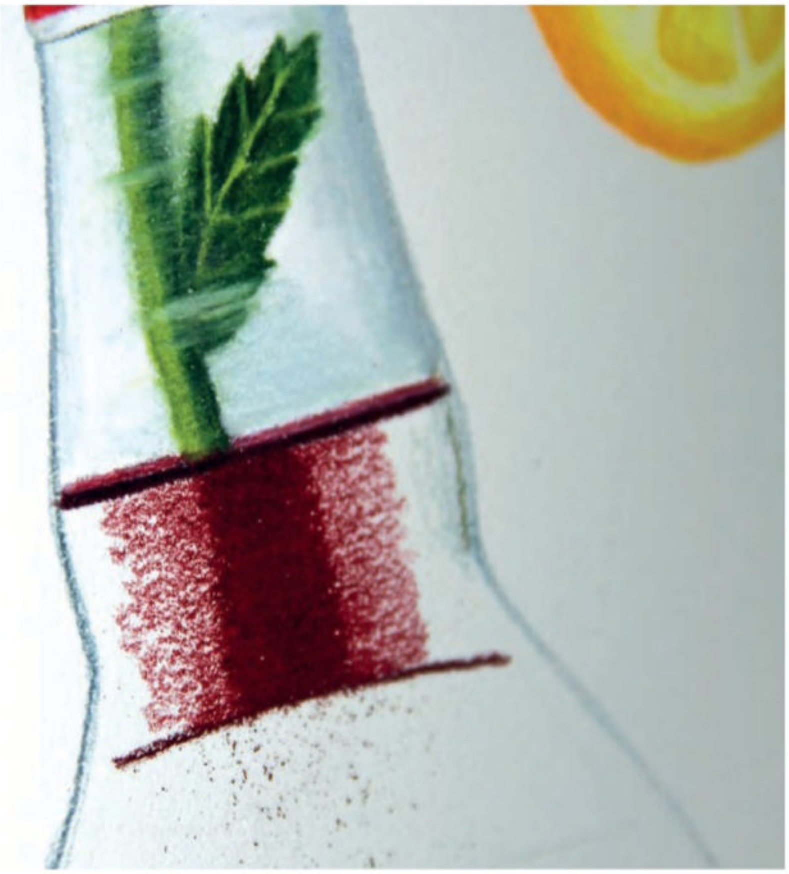


9

GLASS

This is where you will definitely need a lot more layers than you think. As you want to create a distorted colour inside the bottle, this is where you will blur the colour by adding greys on top. Add hints of different hues where reflections would be. In this example, I do use a pretty heavy line technique, as you want to create a rounded appearance. Take your time with this, as there will probably be more colours involved than you initially predicted.





10

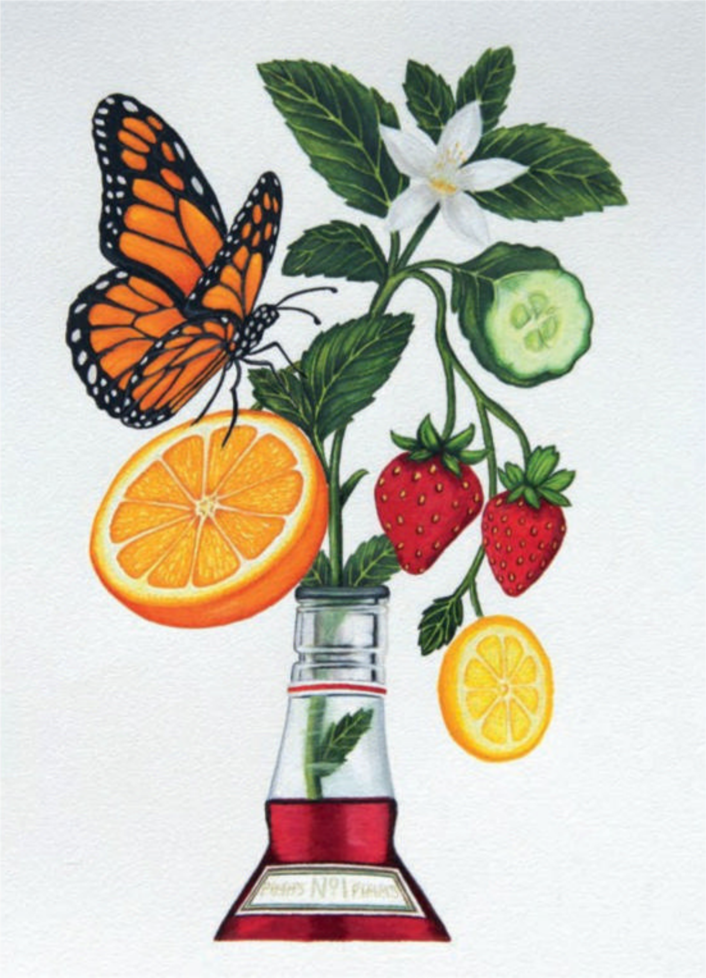
DRAWING LIQUID

As you want the stem to appear inside the liquid, begin with the darkest shade in the centre. You can be somewhat heavy-handed with this, both in horizontal and vertical ellipse motions. Then, bring out a soft layer of that darkest colour on both sides, as this will help to make sure the lighter colour will blend smoothly and so on.

11

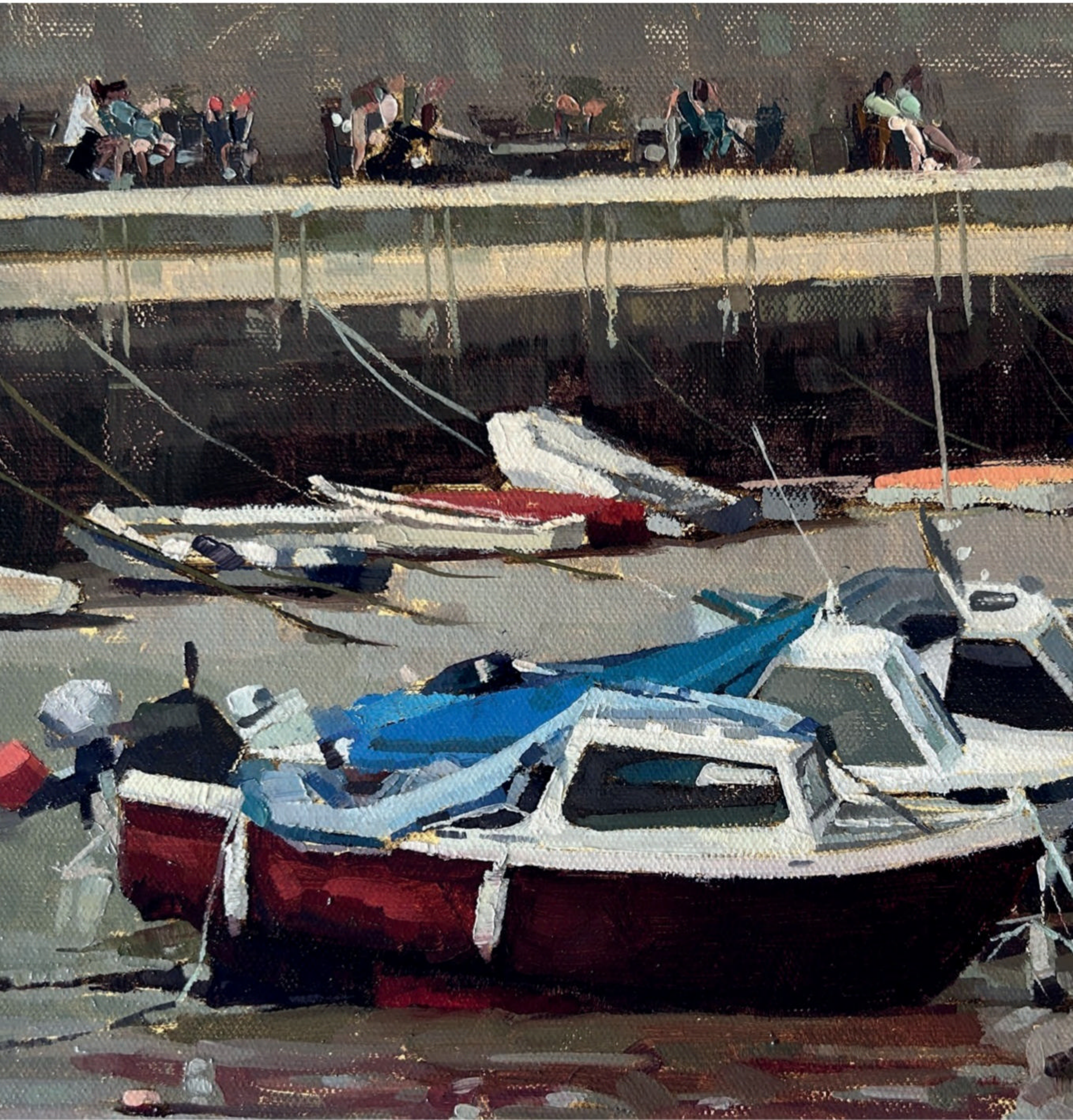
THE END RESULT

I always find when I step away from my easel and then return with fresh eyes, there will be something I can add to enhance different parts of the piece. Sometimes it is most difficult to call a piece complete for this very reason. My advice is to only return to it twice, maximum thrice, and then just trust your judgment and call it a day. Remember: keep your pencils sharp, and your creative mind even sharper! ◻

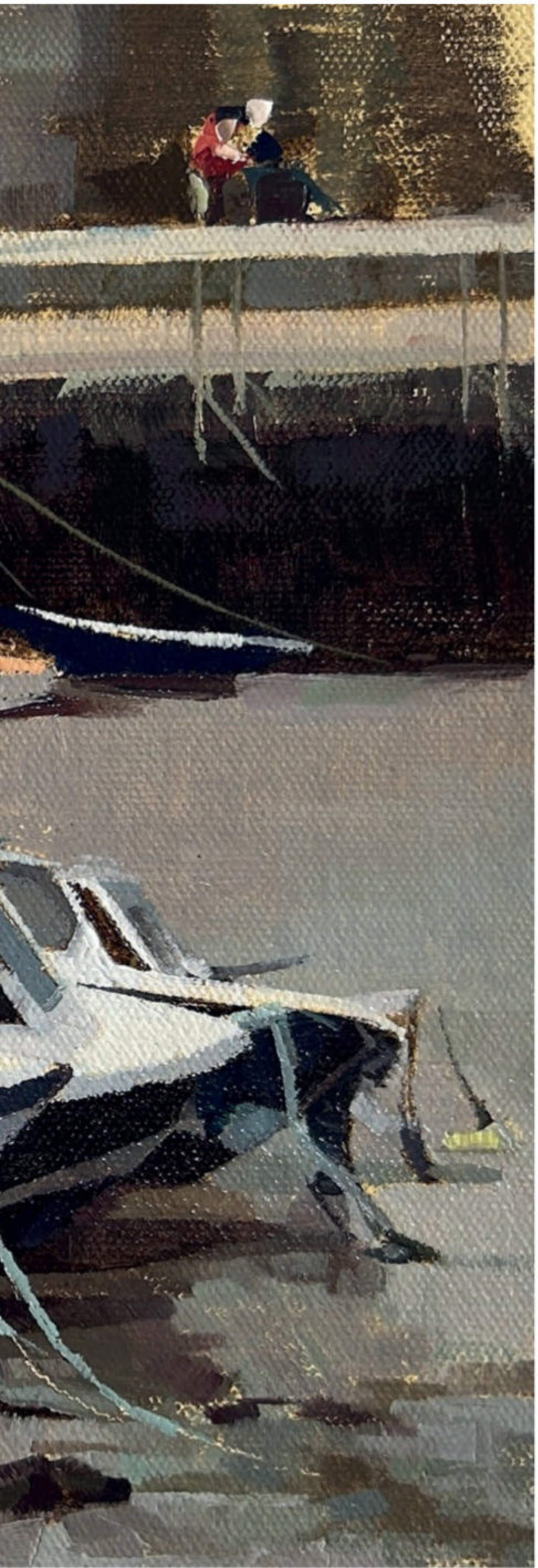


Low

CRAIG ALLEN LEE is an award-winning self-taught artist who likes to capture a sense of place in his oil paintings. Here, he paints a harbour in a moment of calm



tide



CRAIG'S MATERIALS

Paints

Winsor & Newton Artists Oil Paint: Titanium White, Cadmium Free Lemon Yellow, Cadmium Free Yellow, Winsor Orange, Winsor Red Deep, Cerulean Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Phthalo Blue

Brushes

¾ inch soft flat brush

Rosemary & Co Size 4 long ivory synthetic flat

Rosemary & Co Size 4 ivory synthetic Egbert

Support

Canvas panel 25x30cm

Liquin Original

Low-odour solvent (Sansodor)

Gloss varnish (Gamvar)

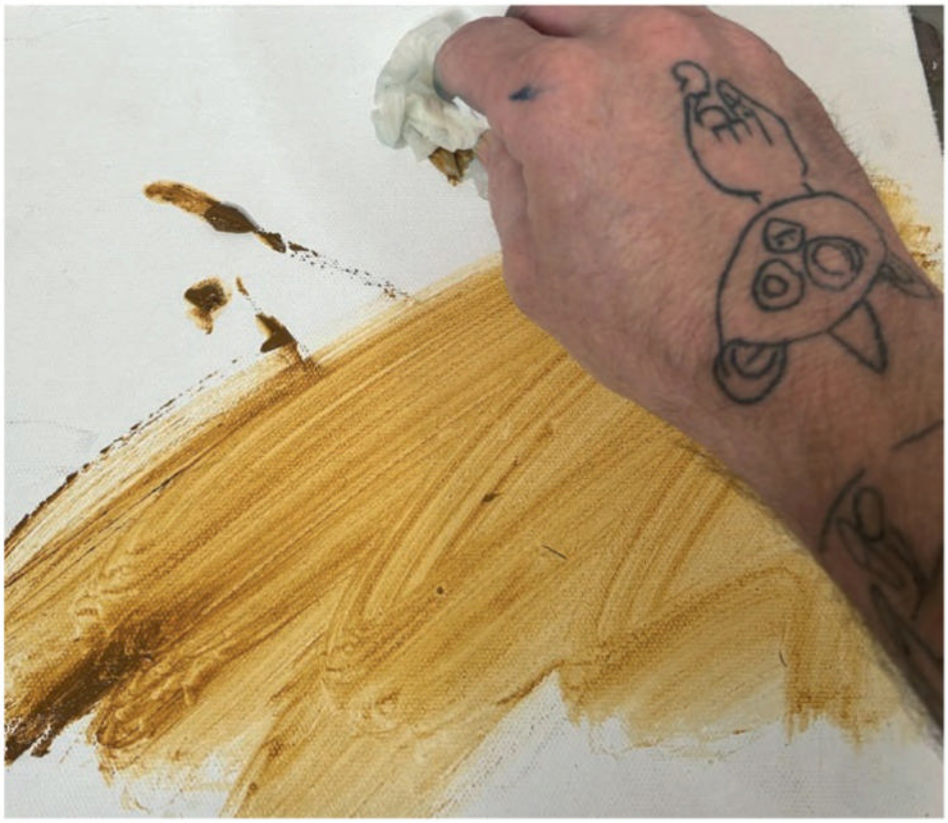
Small palette knife

Strip of MDF for straight edge

I CHOSE TO PAINT THIS SCENE from the Cob Harbour at Lyme Regis because it captures a quiet, reflective moment that's an alternative to the bustle of the town. We often holiday in Devon, and Lyme Regis has become a favourite place of ours to visit. In summer, it's alive with energy, tourists, children playing, and boats bobbing in the harbour. But it's the quieter side of the harbour that draws me in. With so many boats and so much movement, selecting a composition on-site can feel overwhelming. That's why I take many photographs before and after painting on site. This allows me to take my time when I'm back in the studio to see if there may have been a better composition. Sometimes it's one that I may have completely overlooked on the day.

This scene stood out. Boats at low tide appeal to me – they appear stranded, slightly leaning and quietly resting. There's something almost vulnerable about them in that state, unable to perform their purpose, just waiting for the tide to return. I wanted to capture that sense of stillness, to offer a view of the harbour not just as a place of activity, but as one that holds moments of calm. The visitors taking refuge within the shade of the harbour wall was also a factor in my choice.

Instagram: @craigallanleeartist



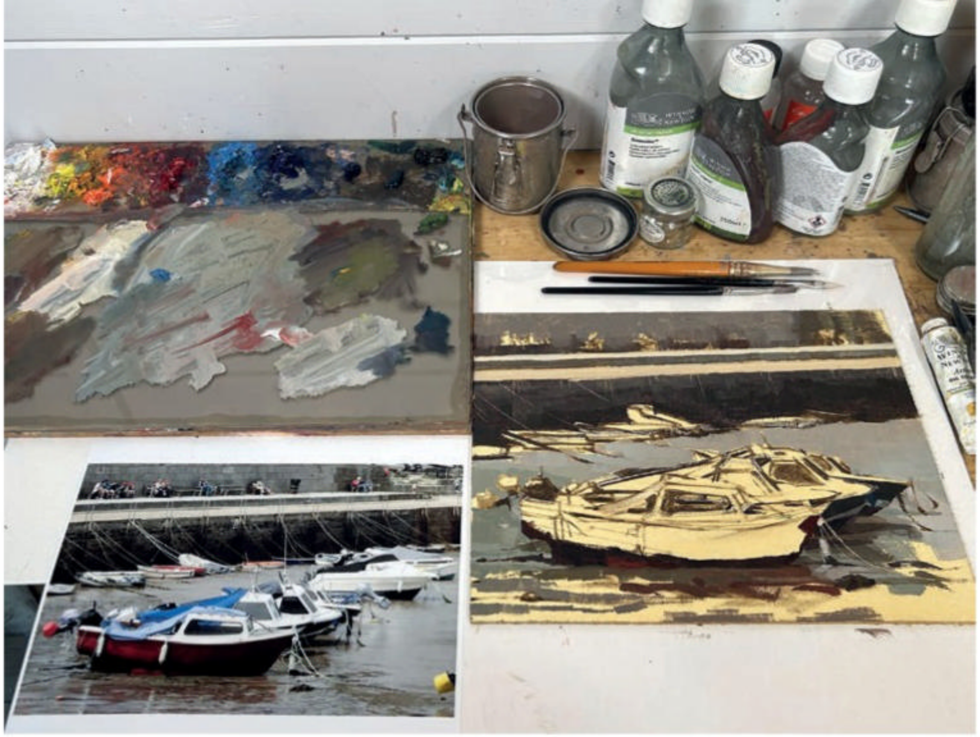
1 THE PANEL

I began by toning the canvas – a step I don't always take, but in this case, I wanted to create a warm undertone for the painting. I diluted a small amount of Raw Sienna with odourless solvent and applied it loosely, then used several pieces of kitchen towel to wipe it back until only a subtle tint remained. In many of my paintings, I intentionally leave certain areas untouched, allowing the undertone to show through. This can be an effective way to create a sense of harmony across the finished piece. ▶

2

THE COMPOSITION

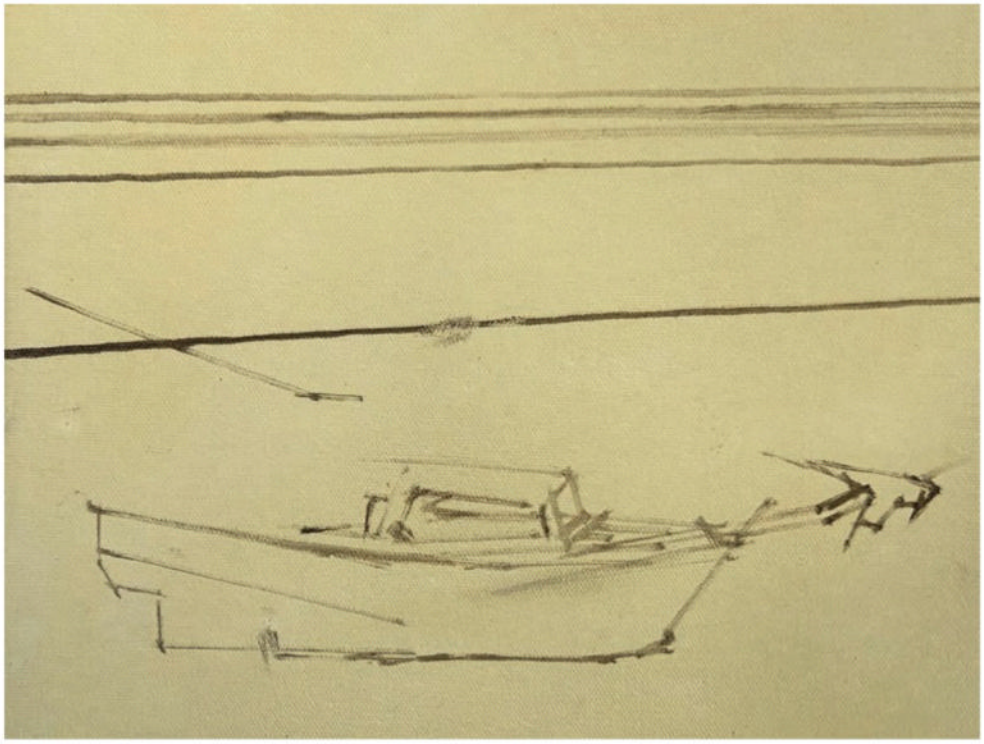
At this stage, I already had a clear idea of how I wanted the composition to work. The white boat in the distance felt distracting; it was pulling attention away from the foreground boats, which I intended to be the main focal point. I decided to remove it, but I didn't want to be left with an empty, unresolved space. To maintain balance, I repositioned the far dinghies, so they stretched across the harbour wall, helping to unify the background and support the overall composition.



3

THE DRAWING

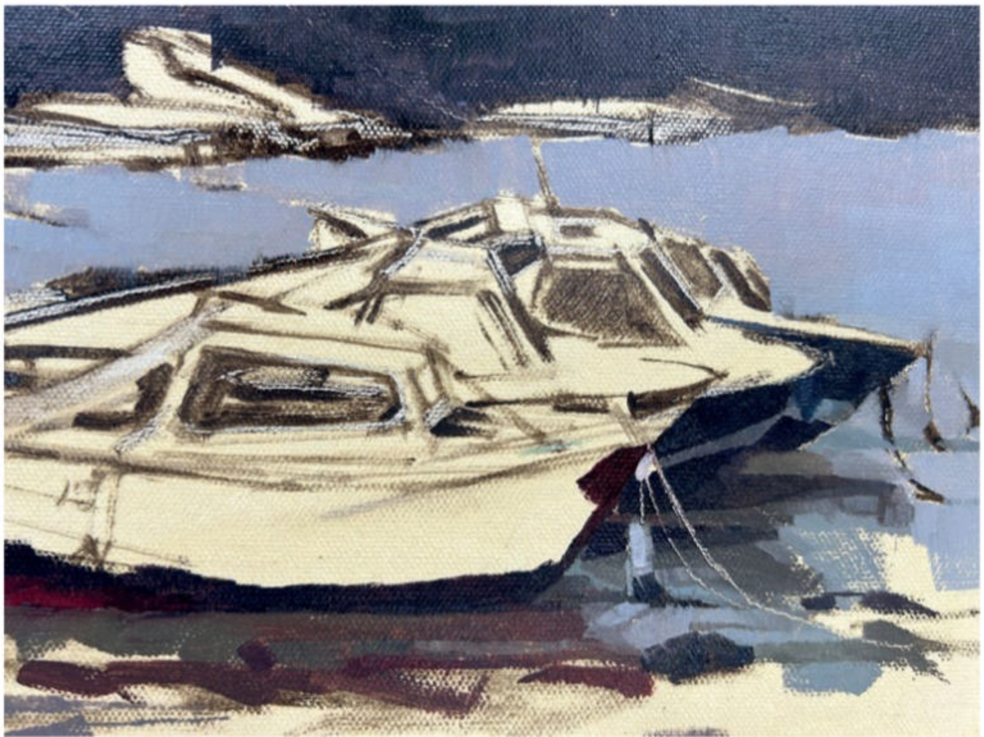
I began the drawing using a small hog brush, Raw Umber and a straight edge. Adding a little solvent improved the flow of the brush and had the added benefit of speeding up the drying time The most important thing at this stage is simply making sure you can see where everything is going to be. It doesn't have to look pretty; it could be just a few dots or some really loose marks. I actually enjoy this stage, so I probably spend a little longer on it than necessary. That said, I've found that the more accurate the drawing is, the easier the painting process becomes.

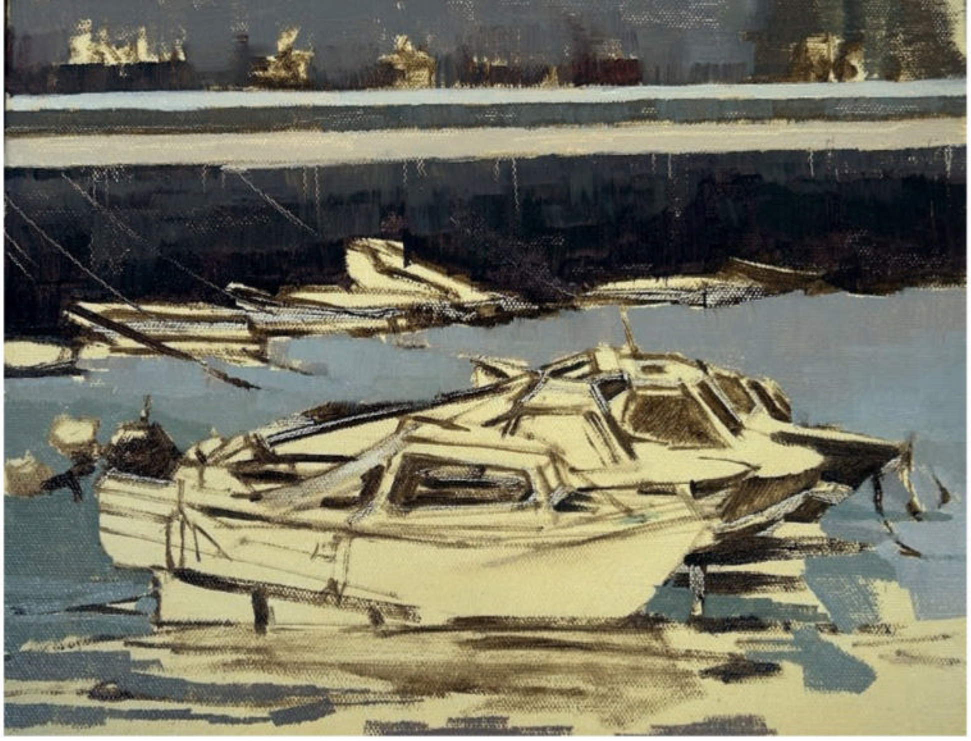


4

BEGINNING TO PAINT

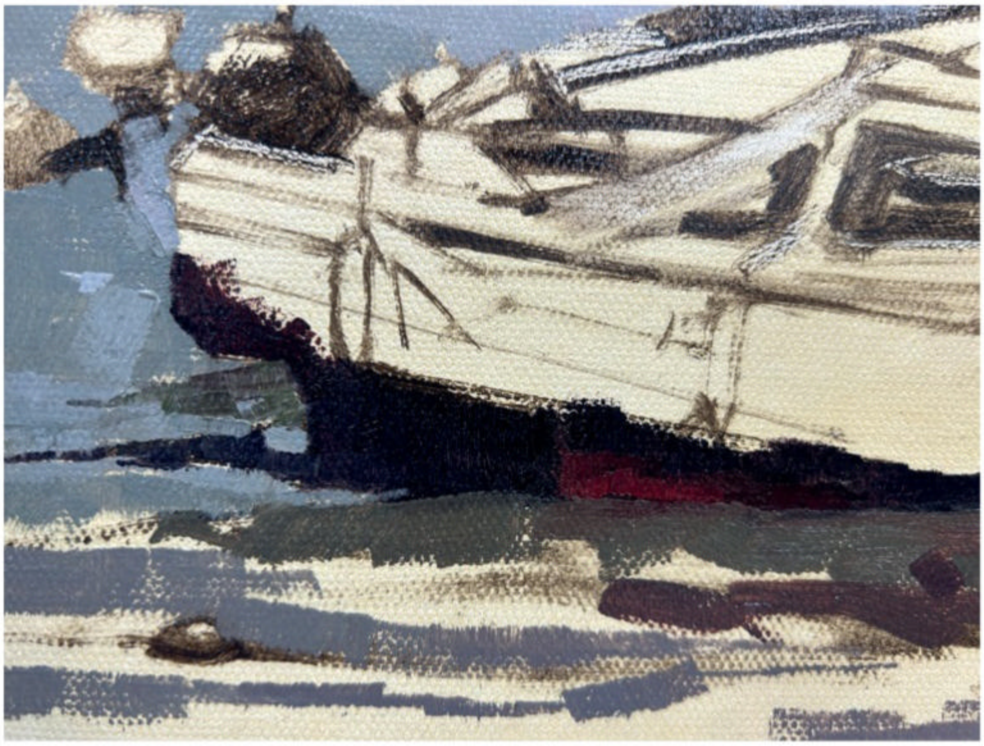
When I began this painting, I started by blocking in the darks first. I used a 3/4-inch soft flat brush. I thinned the paint with solvent to help with speed, flow and quicker drying time. Establishing the darkest values early helped me judge the relative values of the areas next to them more accurately. Working gradually across the canvas in this way made it easier to identify mistakes early on. If I had jumped around the canvas too quickly, it would have been much harder to spot errors until much later in the process. All the way through this painting, I kept asking myself: 'What can I leave out?' More importantly, will adding it improve the painting? When I was drawing, I looked for strong shapes made by the darks, midtones, and lights. Squinting really helped me see the overall value patterns.





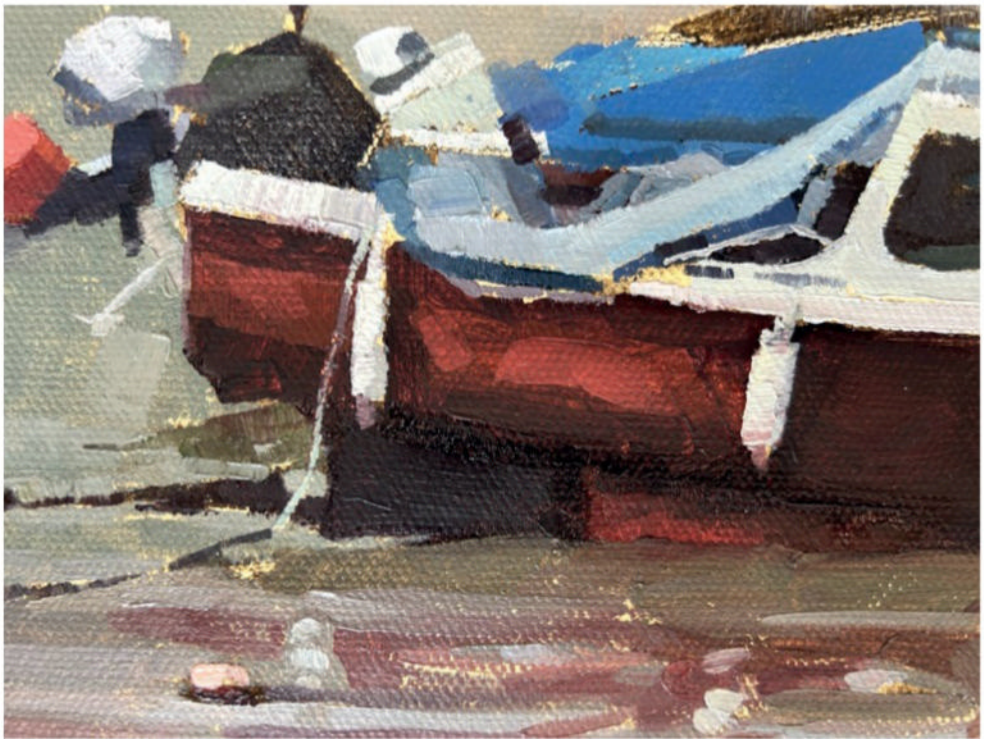
5 KEEP THINGS SIMPLE

While the paint was still wet, I used a palette knife to gently scrape back areas of the harbour wall, revealing the undertone beneath. This technique added visual interest and depth to the surface. I also used the knife to delicately scratch out the fine highlights of the harbour ropes, capturing their subtle glint and texture.



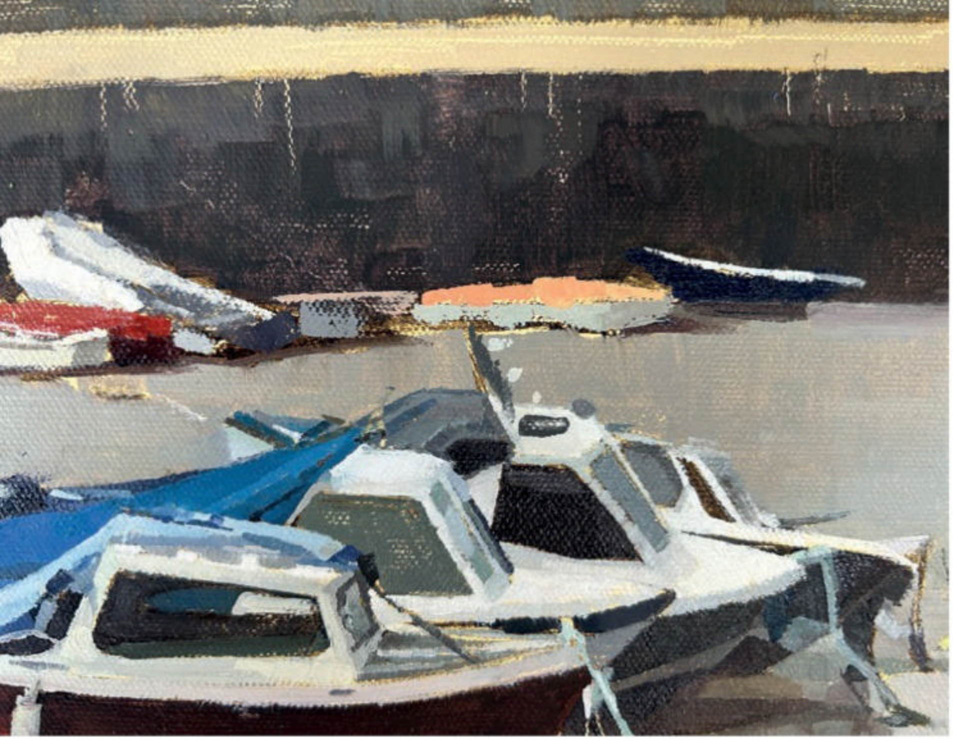
6 TONAL VALUES

I'm constantly thinking about tonal values; they're the most important aspect to get right. You can change the colours in a painting and still end up with a strong result, but if the tonal relationships are off, something will always feel wrong, even if you can't quite put your finger on it. Take the water, for example. I'm not overcomplicating it, just laying down simple shapes of value. It's also important to remember that a single value can contain a variety of colours. Just because two areas are the same value doesn't mean they need to be the same hue; there can be a lot of subtlety within that range.



7 BRUSHWORKS AND EDGES

I'm not aiming for smooth blending. I like to leave brushstrokes visible for a more painterly feel. Sometimes I'll soften a stroke by fading it into the adjoining value, which creates a softer edge. Since I'm working wet-on-wet, many of the edges naturally sort themselves out. So don't stress about getting them perfect right away – just paint. You can always check and adjust your edges at the end of a session. Hard edges are easiest with a flat brush. For softer edges, reach for a filbert. ▸

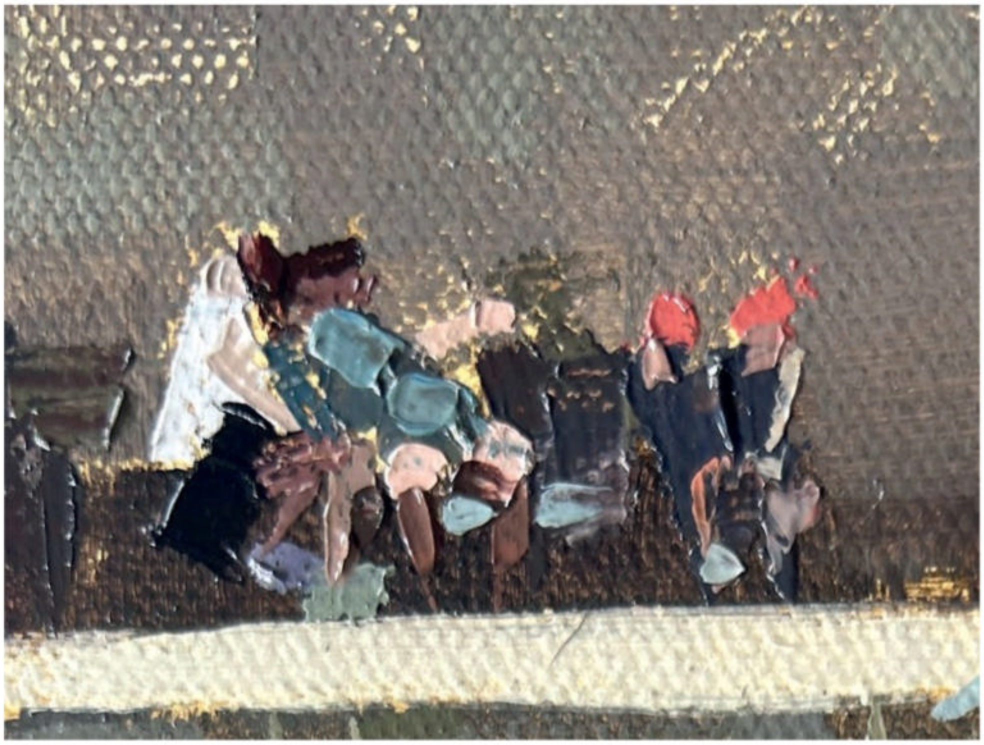


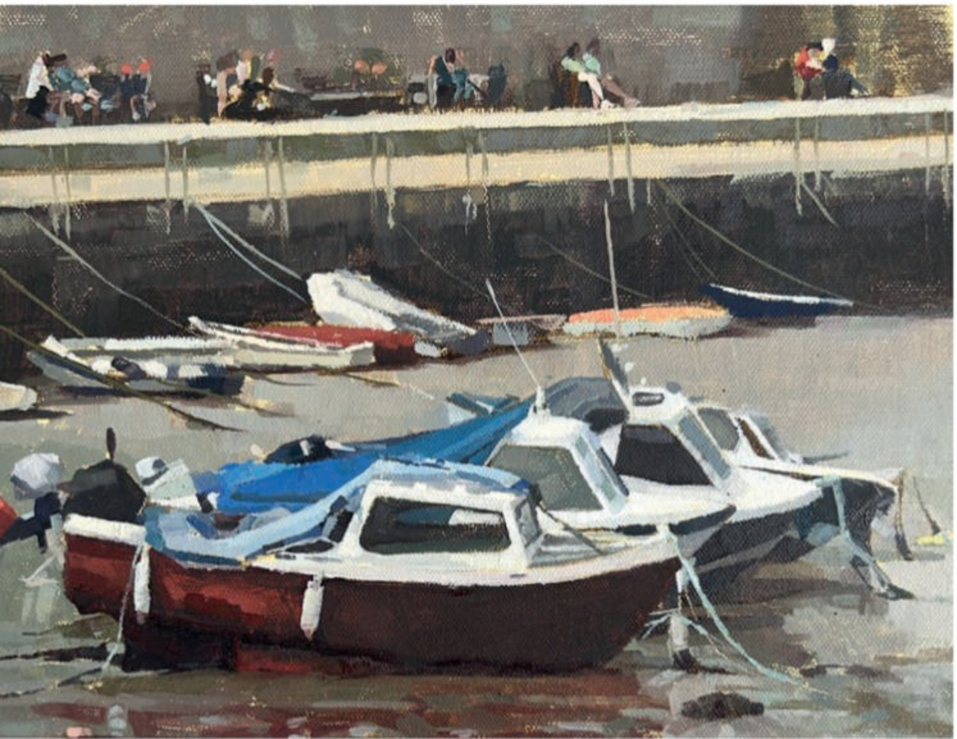
8 WHITES AREN'T ALWAYS WHITE

When I started painting the lightest areas – in this case, the "white" boats – I didn't reach straight for pure Titanium White. While I might have been able to use it in a few of the brightest highlights, experience has taught me that pure white rarely exists. The surrounding environment always influences it: the blue of the sky or water, the red reflecting from another boat, or even the orange warmth of sunlight can subtly tint those whites. So instead, I mixed in touches of those surrounding colours to create a more realistic feel. It's also important to remember that even within the "whites," there is a range of values – from near-white highlights to cooler or warmer mid-tones. Observing and capturing those shifts brings depth and realism to the painting. I waited to paint the boats until I had laid in an average value for the surrounding seabed. This gave me a clear idea for the values needed.

9 FIGURES

Now that I had the majority of the painting down, I couldn't resist working on the figures any longer. I decided to render them as very basic shapes. Although I could see them clearly enough in my photograph, I knew that in real life, I would have struggled to make out any details, especially since I'm short-sighted. Using my palette knife, I applied thick, clean values, paying particular attention to the highlights where flesh meets sunlight. If you take a close look at the figures, the marks are very abstract. However, when you step back and view the painting as a whole, it all comes together.





10 FINAL TOUCHES – AND VARNISHING

Once I'm happy with the overall painting, I take a step back and check for anything that might be missing – like small highlights, for example from the harbour ropes or flat areas that could use more depth. Sometimes I add broken colour or a half-step in value to bring those areas to life, or to subdued if needed. I also like to create extra interest by introducing colours that weren't originally there. For texture, I might scrape, sand, or scratch into the surface, to give the painting a bit more energy and character. As soon as my painting was dry to the touch, I applied a coat of Gamvar gloss varnish to protect the surface and even out the finish. This also helped revive the darks, which had become sunken due to solvent use during the painting process. I like using Gamvar because it's a breathable varnish, allowing the paint layers to continue curing underneath. It's also easily removable; just a gentle wipe with solvent on a soft lint-free cloth is enough to lift it without damaging the paint layer. ◻

The Telegraph

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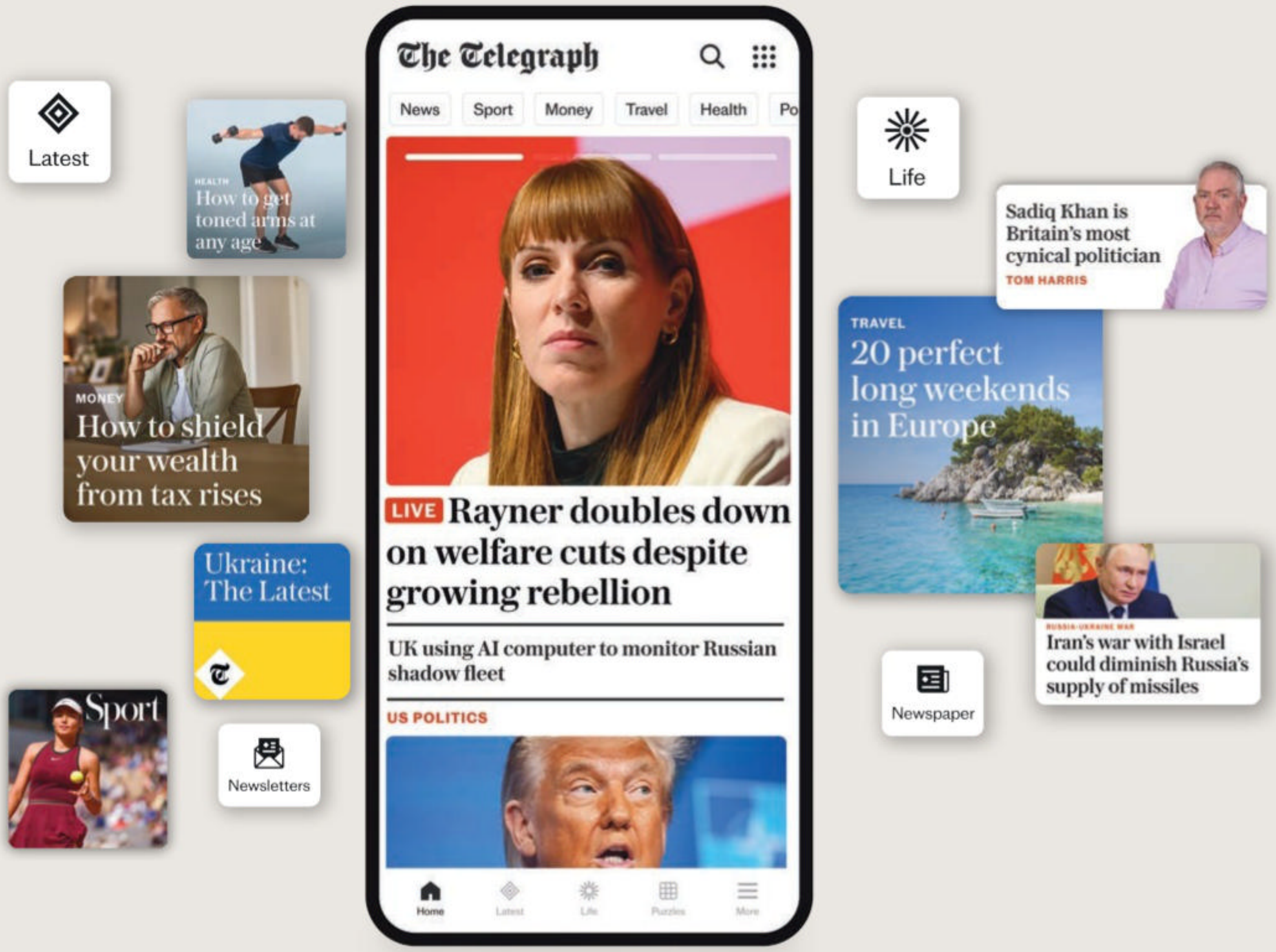
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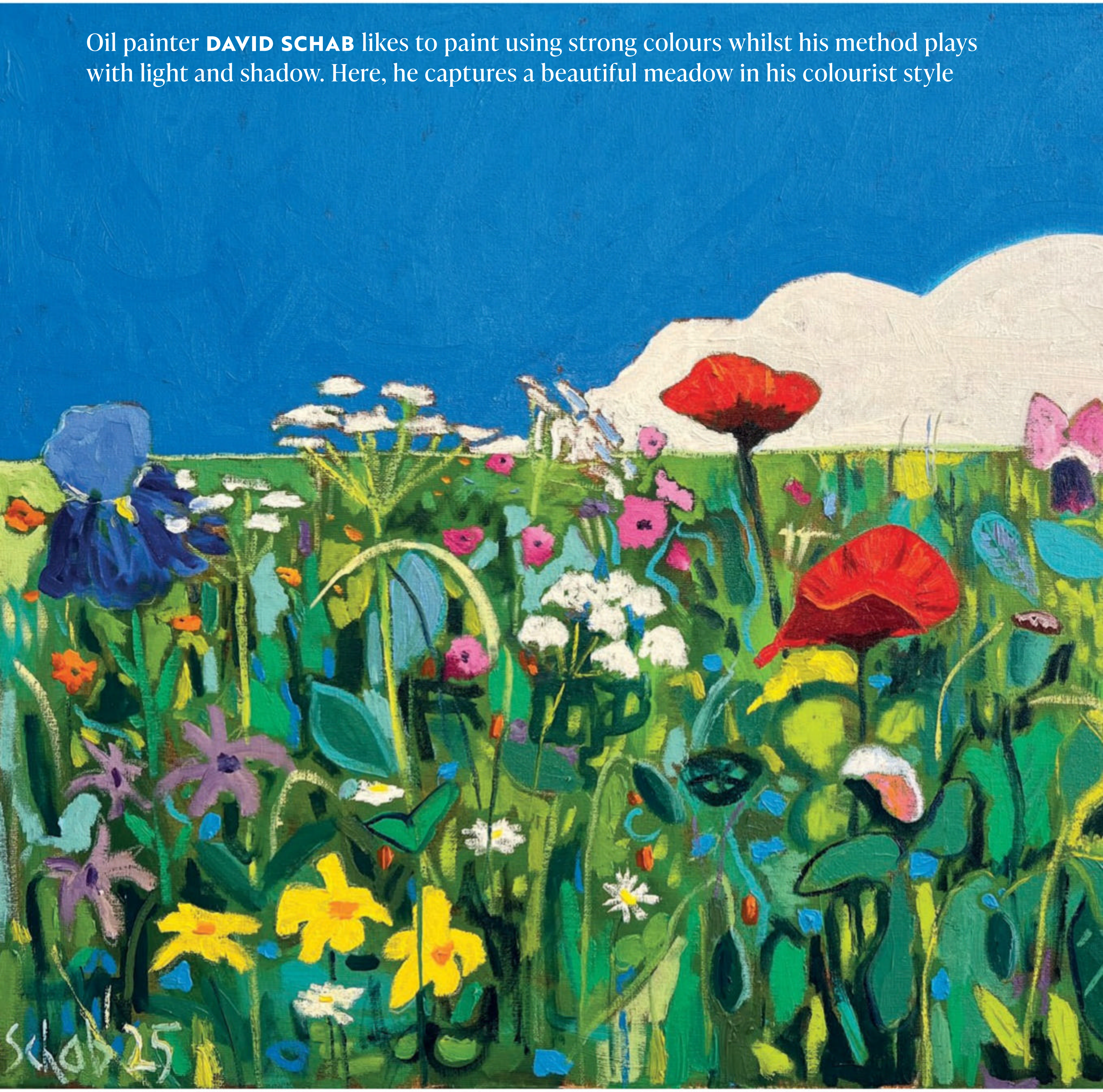
Summer mea

Oil painter **DAVID SCHAB** likes to paint using strong colours whilst his method plays with light and shadow. Here, he captures a beautiful meadow in his colourist style



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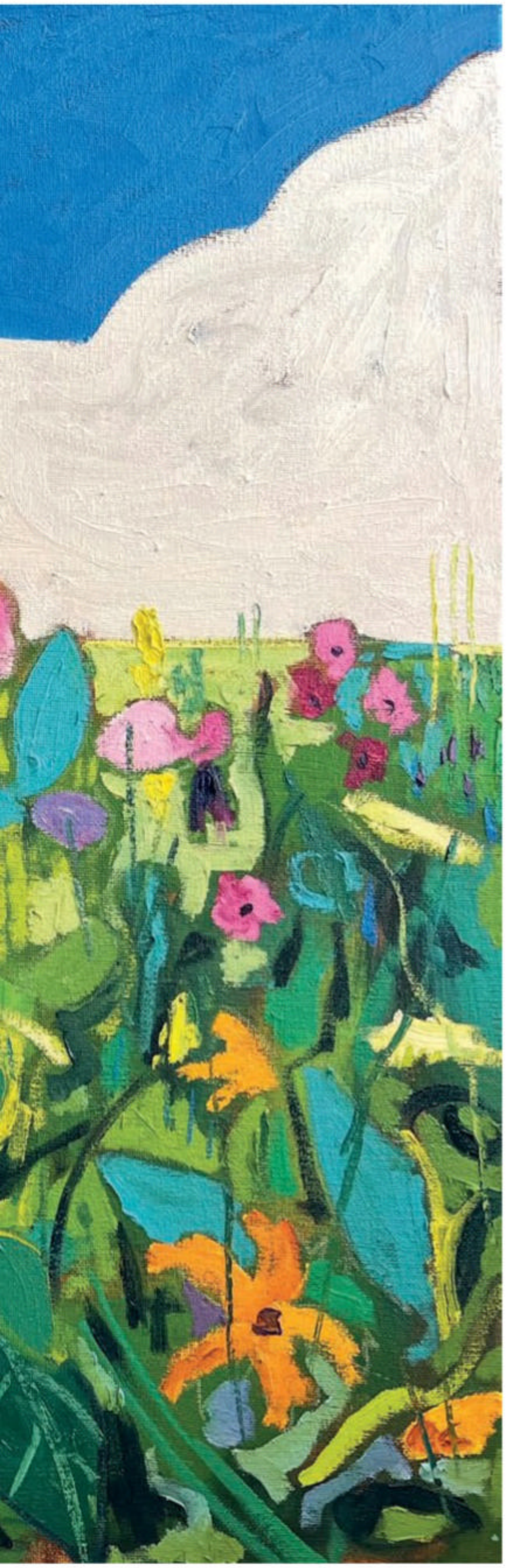


I AM A COLOURIST PAINTER. With brushes and oil paints, I depict a world that's more beautiful than it is in reality. My favourite painting subjects, where I can truly let loose with colour, are still lifes and landscapes. The more colourful, the better.

I carefully observe the world around me, picking out the most interesting fragments and transferring them onto canvas. Thanks to a winter landscape, I was selected to take part in the TV show *Landscape Artist of the Year* (Season 9). For this, I decided to take on a summer landscape.

Our sunny and hot summer gave me plenty of reasons to paint it. The light made the colours more vivid, and the contrasts created by the shadows were captivating. While searching for inspiration, my intuition led me into nature – to beautiful meadows and the endless open spaces of Wiltshire, between Bristol and Bath. It was the perfect choice. And here is the result.

Instagram: @davidschab

DAVID'S MATERIALS

Paints

Van Dyke: 46, 54, 58, 80, 84, 85, 86, 87

Van Gogh: 208, 223, 313, 372, 508, 530, 538, 615, 619, 668

Sennelier: 645, 399

Rembrandt: 266

Winsor & Newton: Titanium White

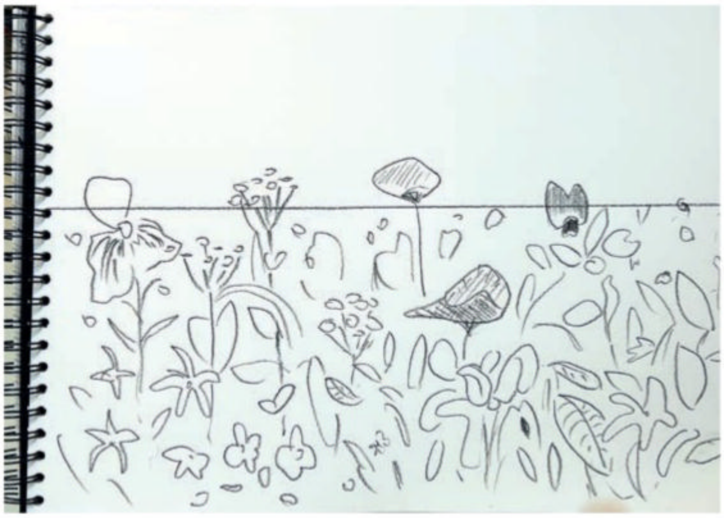
Brushes

A number of sizes from Liquitex, Renesans, Restaurohouse, Woodpecker and Blackbird

Support

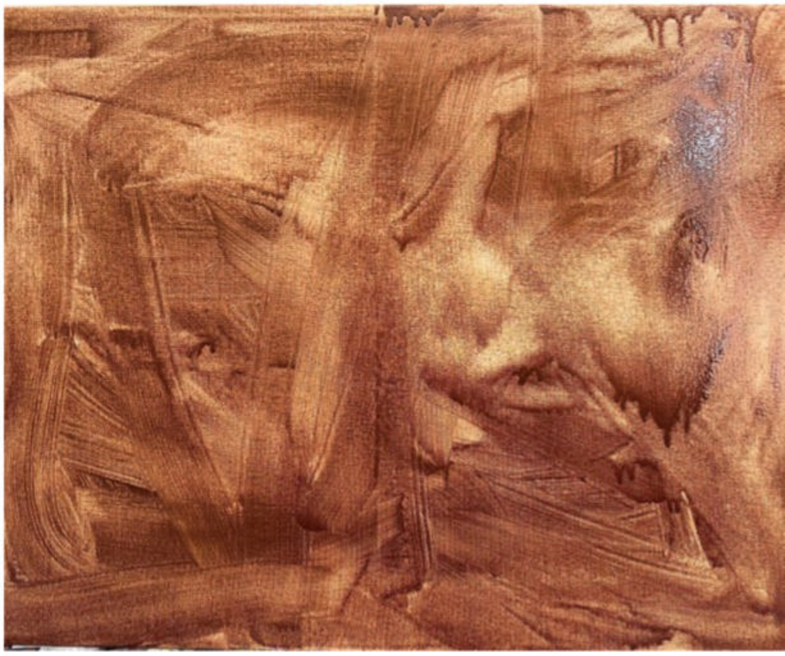
Liquin: Windsor & Newton (speeds drying)

60x80cm cotton canvas



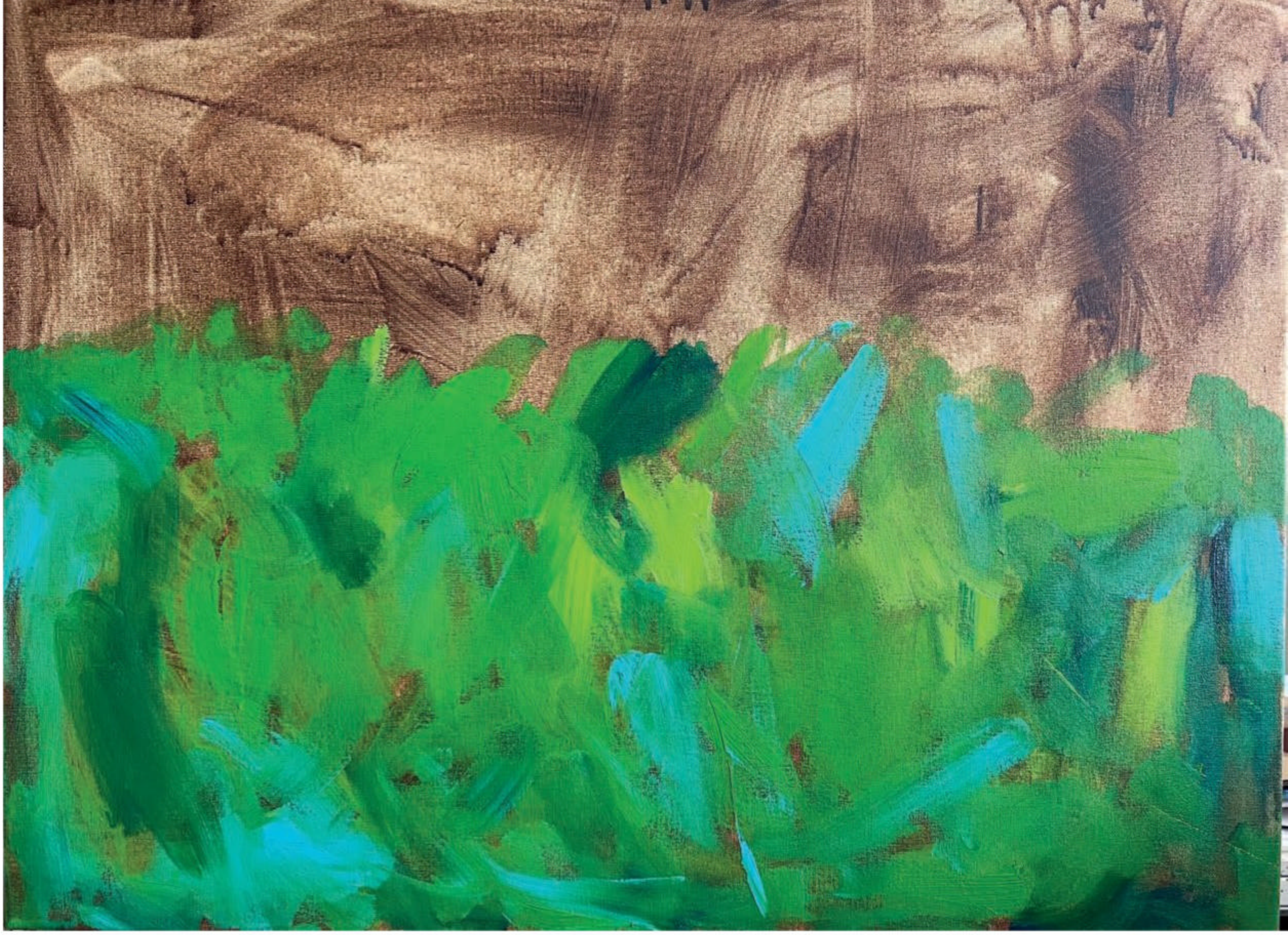
1 CHOOSE YOUR SUBJECT

To begin painting a picture, you need to have an idea – what the painting will be about, what it will depict and what you want to communicate to the viewer. In this case, the theme was summer. I took advantage of the beautiful weather and went in search of inspiration to the village of Box in Wiltshire. I took plenty of photos of the local flora. That's when the idea became clear: it would be a colourful, flower-filled summer meadow. It's hard to find a better symbol of summer. Ireturned to my studio and sketched out a draft on paper.



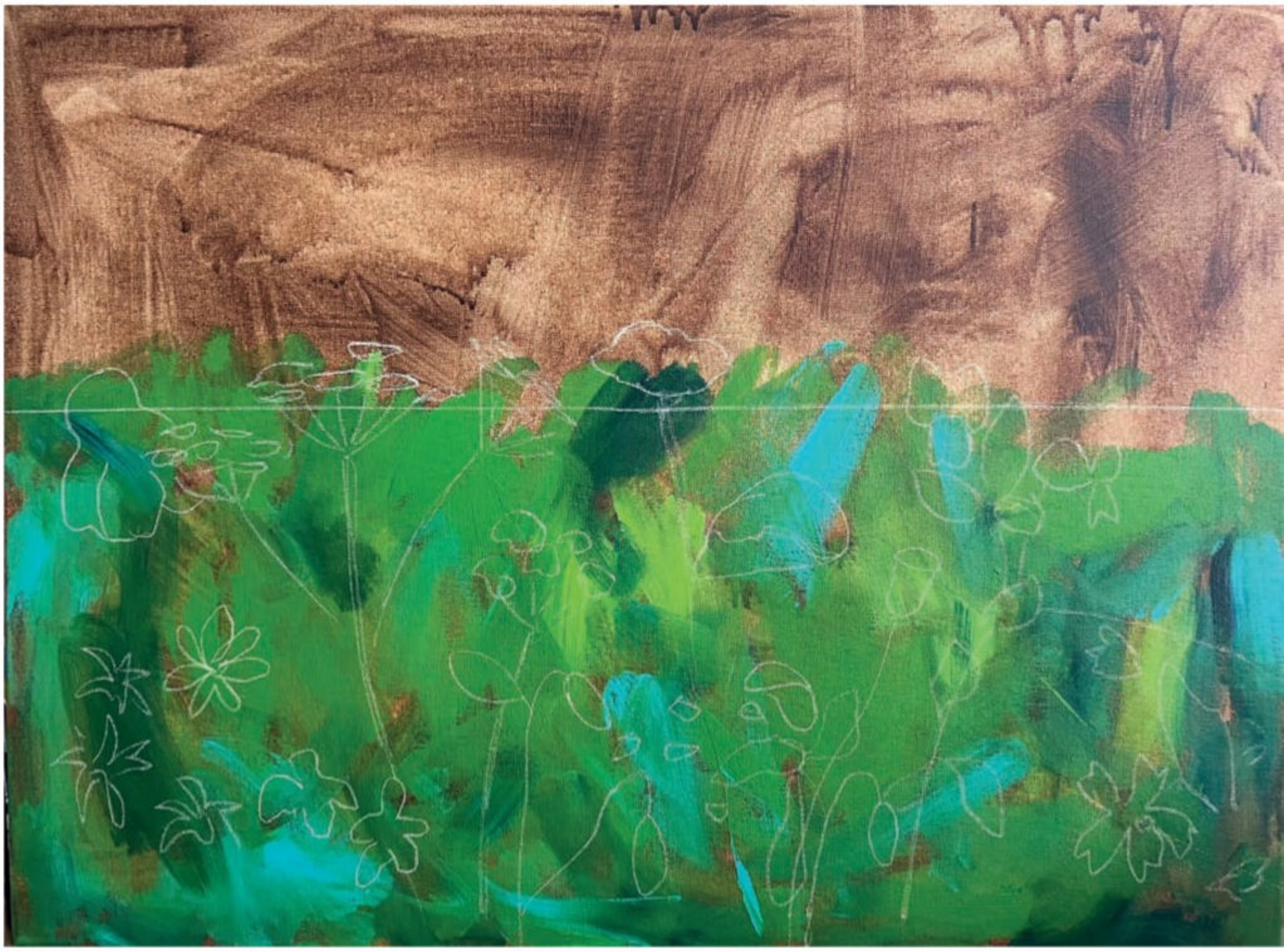
2 THE UNDERPAINTING

To paint this summer landscape, I chose a cotton canvas measuring 60x80cm. Landscapes work best on horizontal canvases, although square formats can also work well. In this case, I went with a horizontally oriented rectangle. I set the canvas on an easel and primed it entirely with Burnt Umber acrylic paint. I always create a coloured underpainting; it helps give depth to the final result. This base colour always peeks through in places and works well with the brushstrokes on the canvas. ▶



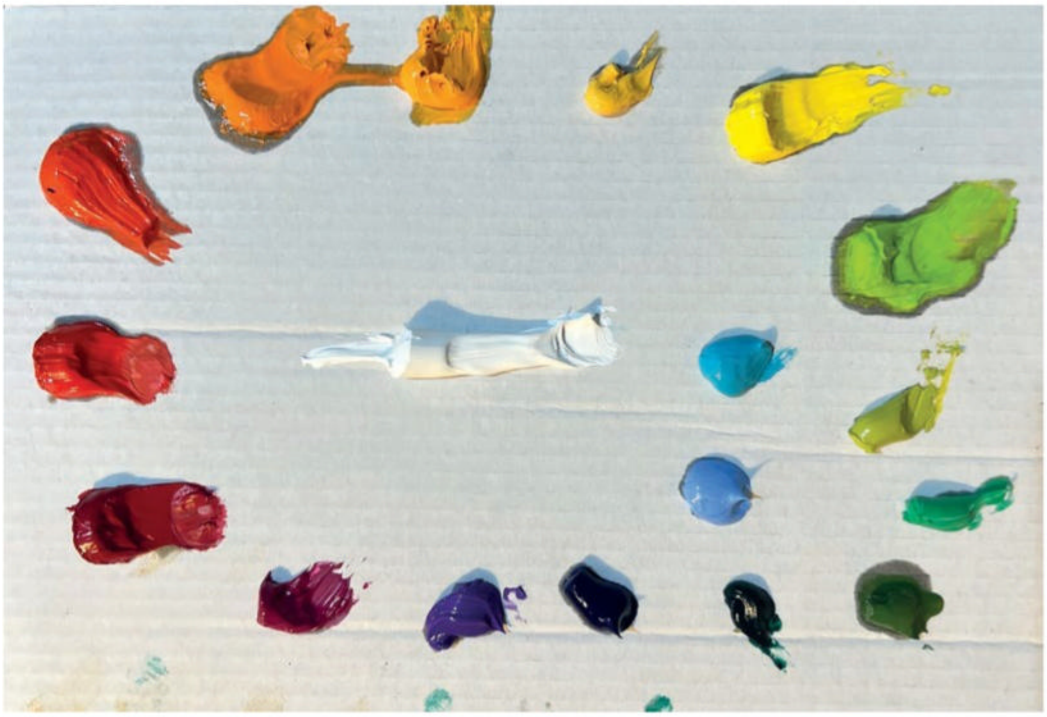
3 TIME FOR COLOUR ▲

The next step was to apply the first layers of colour, in this case various shades of green and blue using oil paints mixed with Liquin to speed up drying. This helped me better capture the complex surface and character of the meadow.



4 THE DETAILS

Once that layer was dry, I used a dry pastel pencil to sketch out the horizon (important: not placed in the center of the canvas) as well as the details of the meadow – flowers, leaves, blades of grass. The sketch helps with controlling the composition and placing all elements precisely. Dry pastel works best for me, as it's easy to adjust and erase.

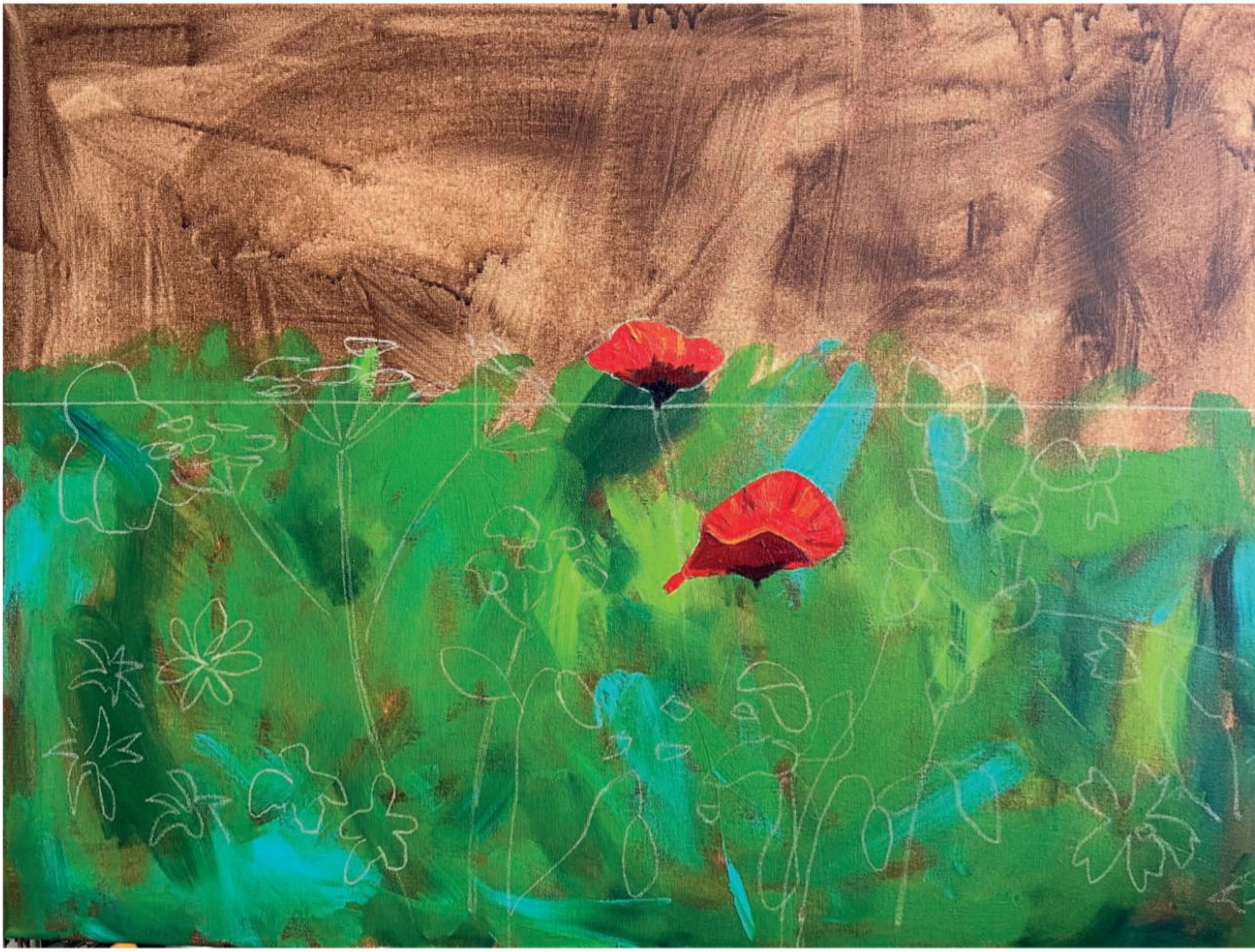


5 PICK YOUR COLOURS

This is the stage where I select the colours for my palette to be used in the final painting. It's a moment to let your imagination run wild. Since I'm a colourist, I have no trouble choosing bold and vibrant hues. It's pure pleasure for me.

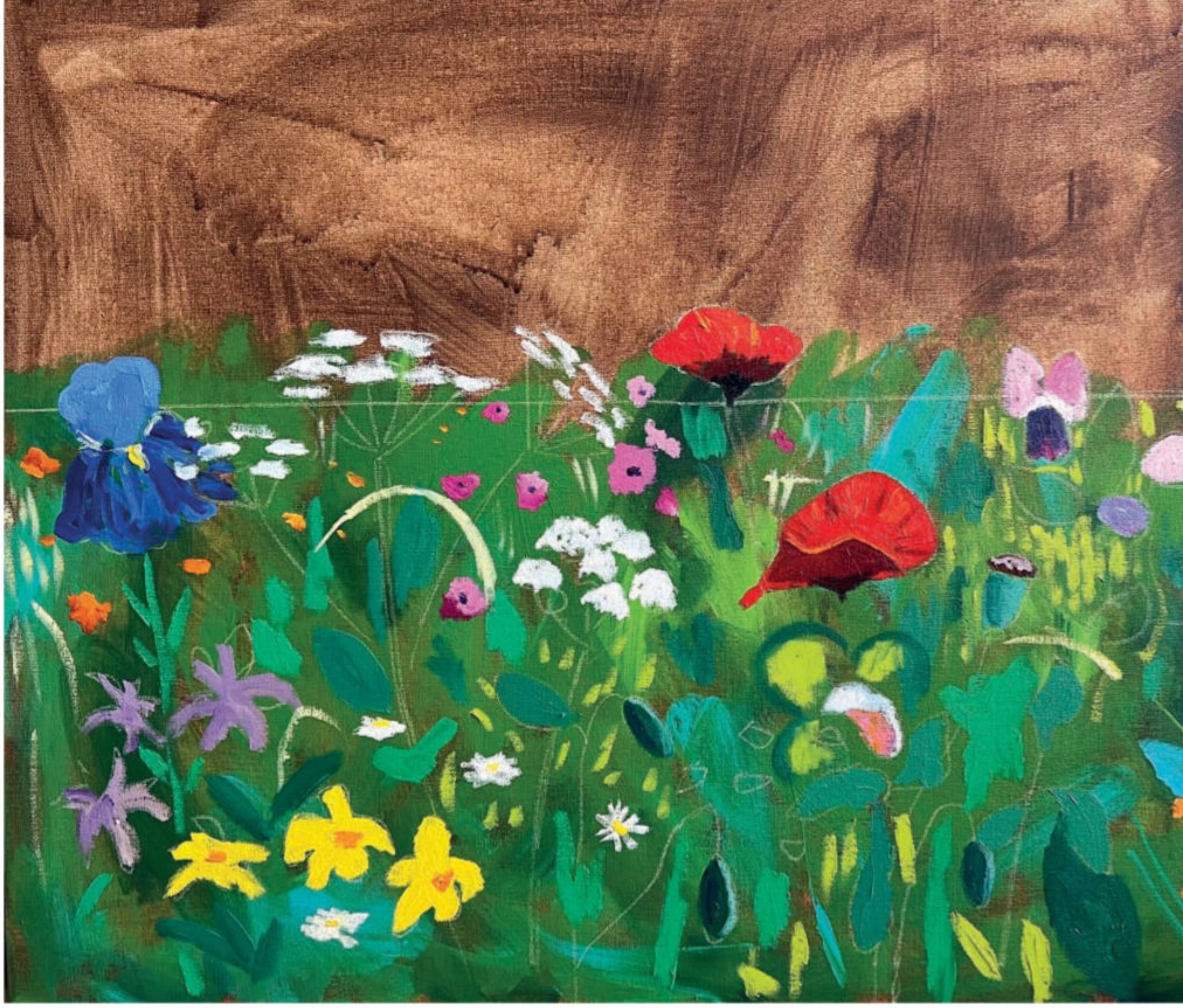
6 THE POPPIES

I begin mixing colours on the palette to achieve the desired result. I use a lot of Titanium White to brighten the palette, especially in a summery landscape full of light and pastel tones. I start painting the first flowers. I began with the stars of the painting – beautiful red poppies. They take the foreground and catch the eye. That was my plan. ▶



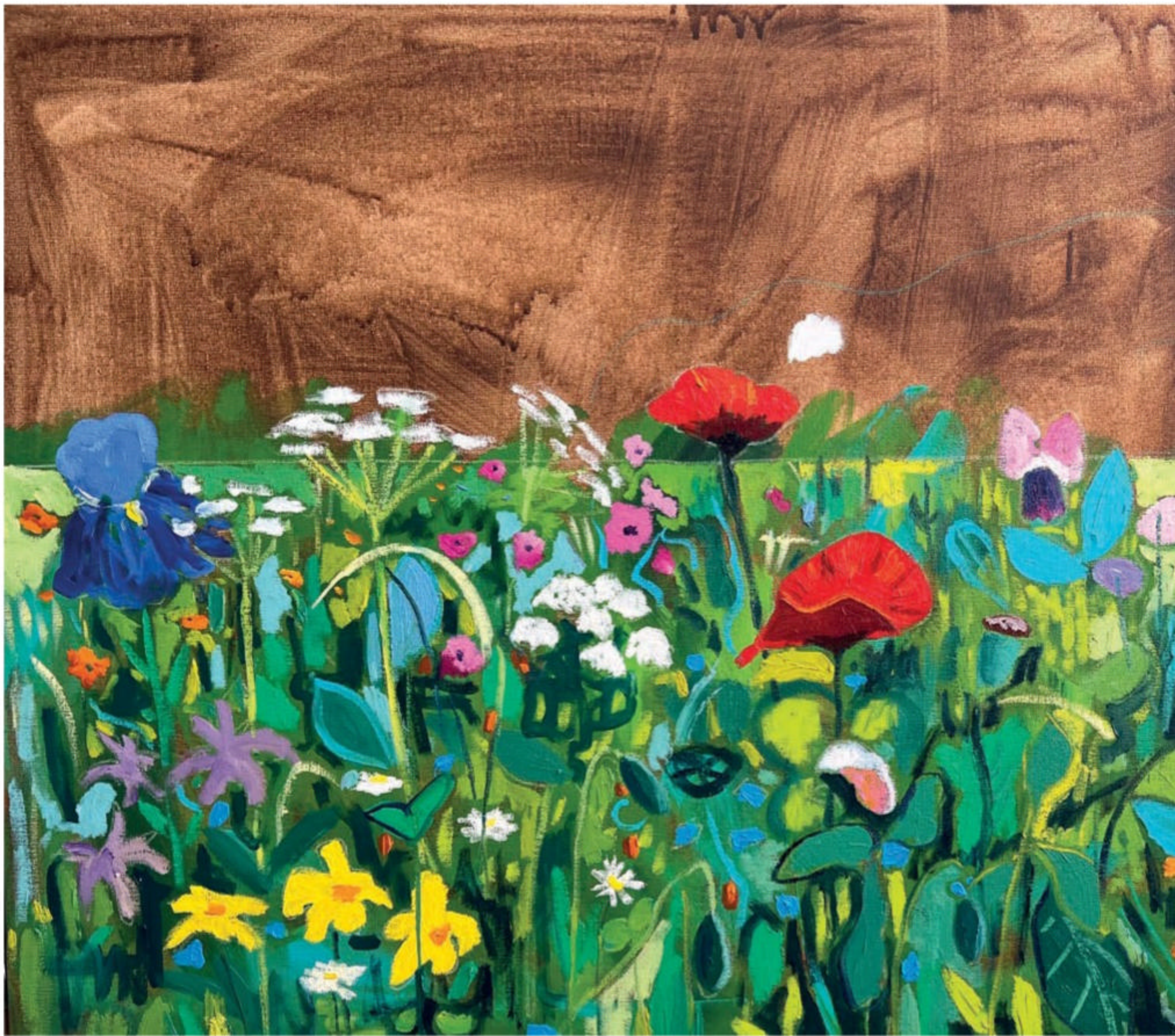
7 ADD MORE BLOOMS

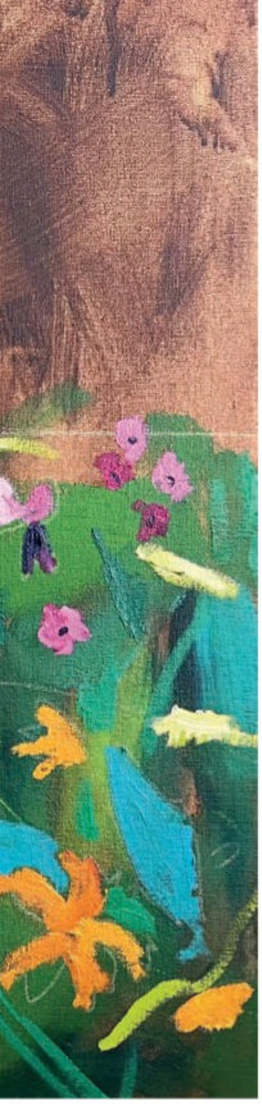
I continue by adding more colourful flowers and leaves, making sure to place them thoughtfully to create a harmonious composition, while also keeping the natural, slightly chaotic feel of a real meadow. That balance takes careful thought.

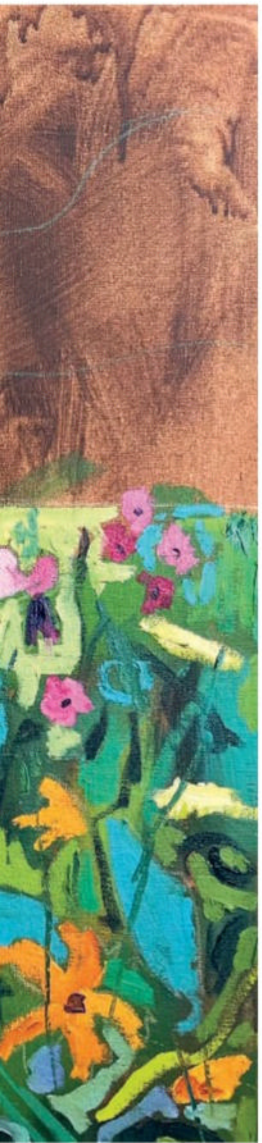


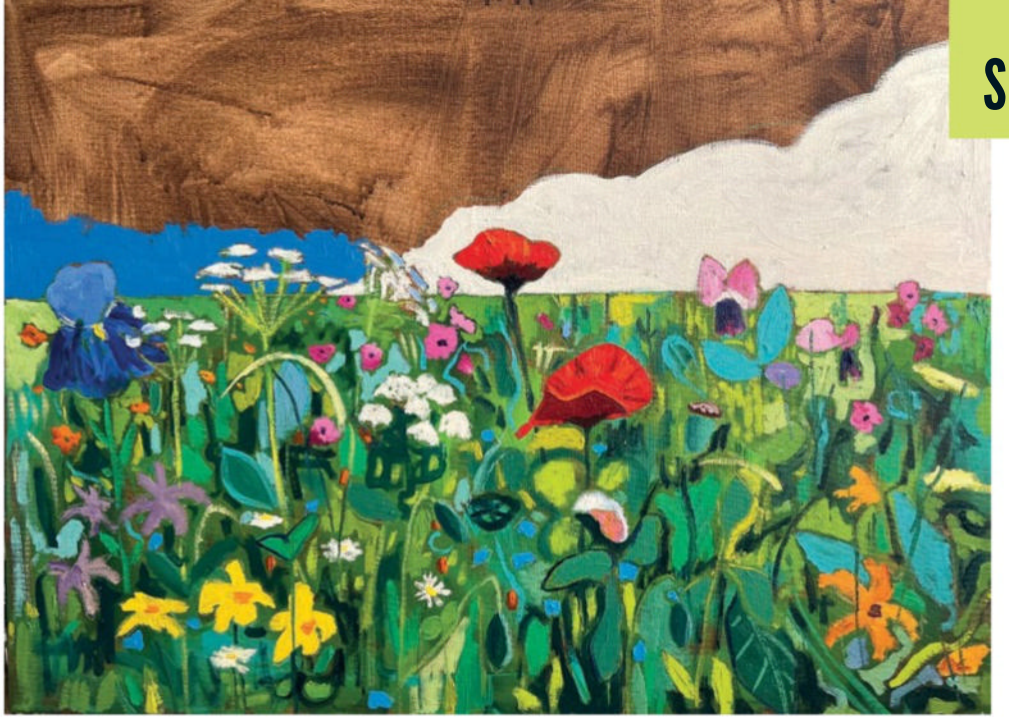
8 LET LOOSE WITH YOUR BRUSH

I then filled the areas between the flowers and leaves with expressive, somewhat chaotic brushstrokes in various shades of green and blue. I don't cover the canvas completely; I intentionally leave some areas unpainted to let the colours from earlier layers show through. This allows the painting to breathe and gives the meadow a three-dimensional quality.



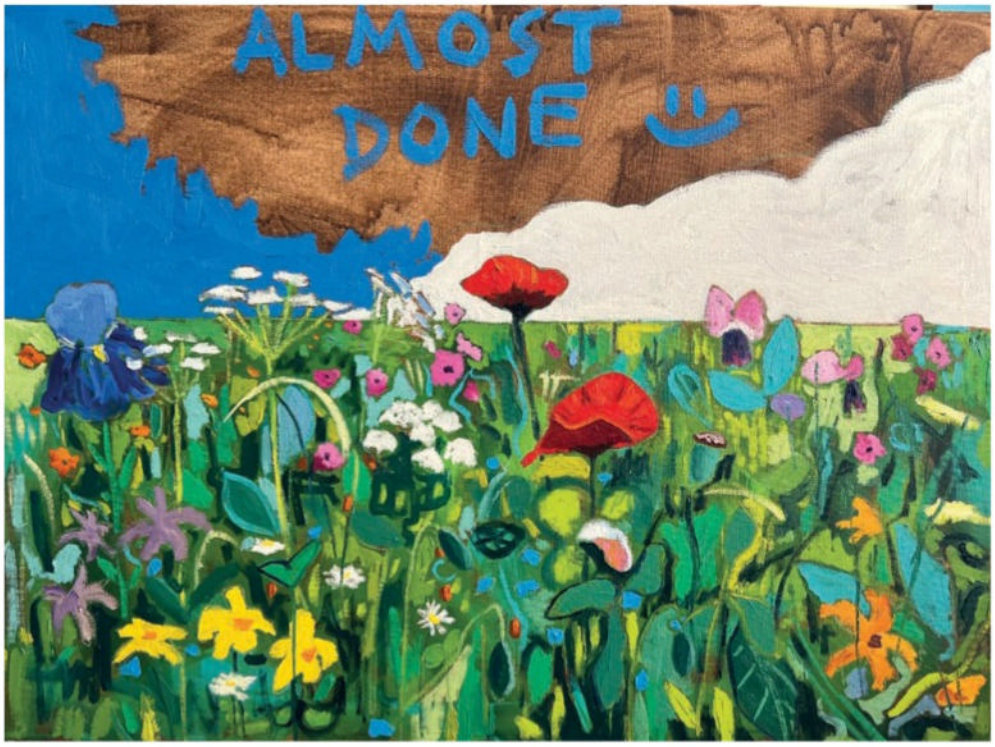






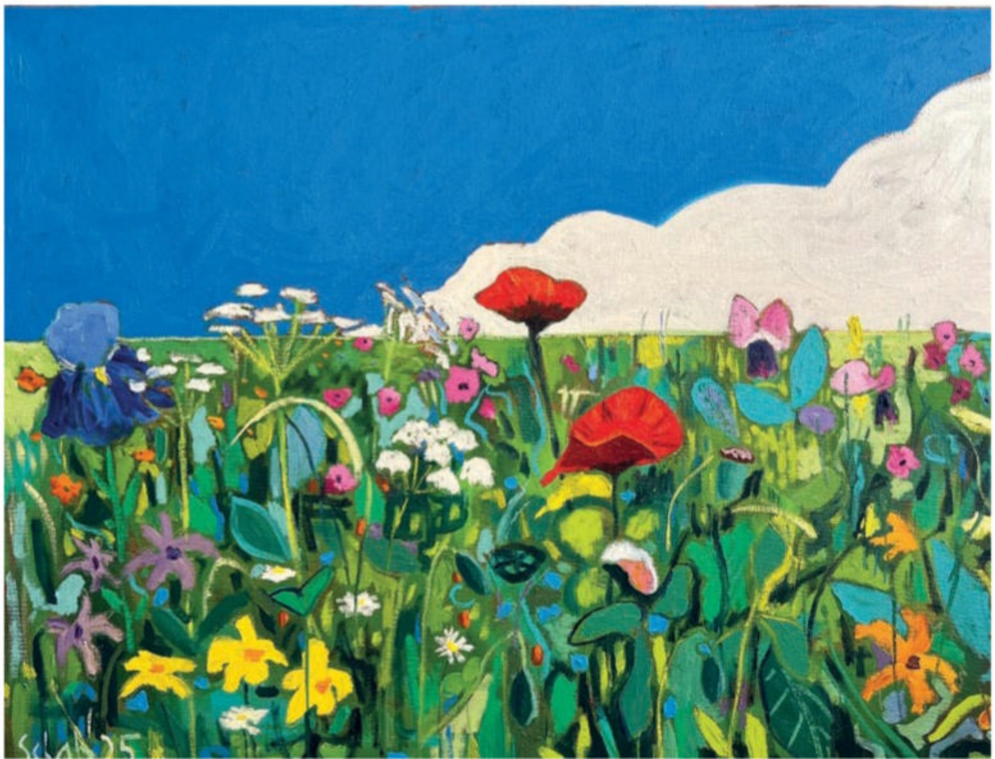
9 ADD CONTRAST

While painting the meadow, I had the idea to add a snow-white cloud cutting like a wedge between the green of the meadow and the Cyan Blue of the summer sky. This turned out to be a great decision – the cloud serves as a perfect backdrop for the poppy, making it stand out even more thanks to the strong colour contrast.



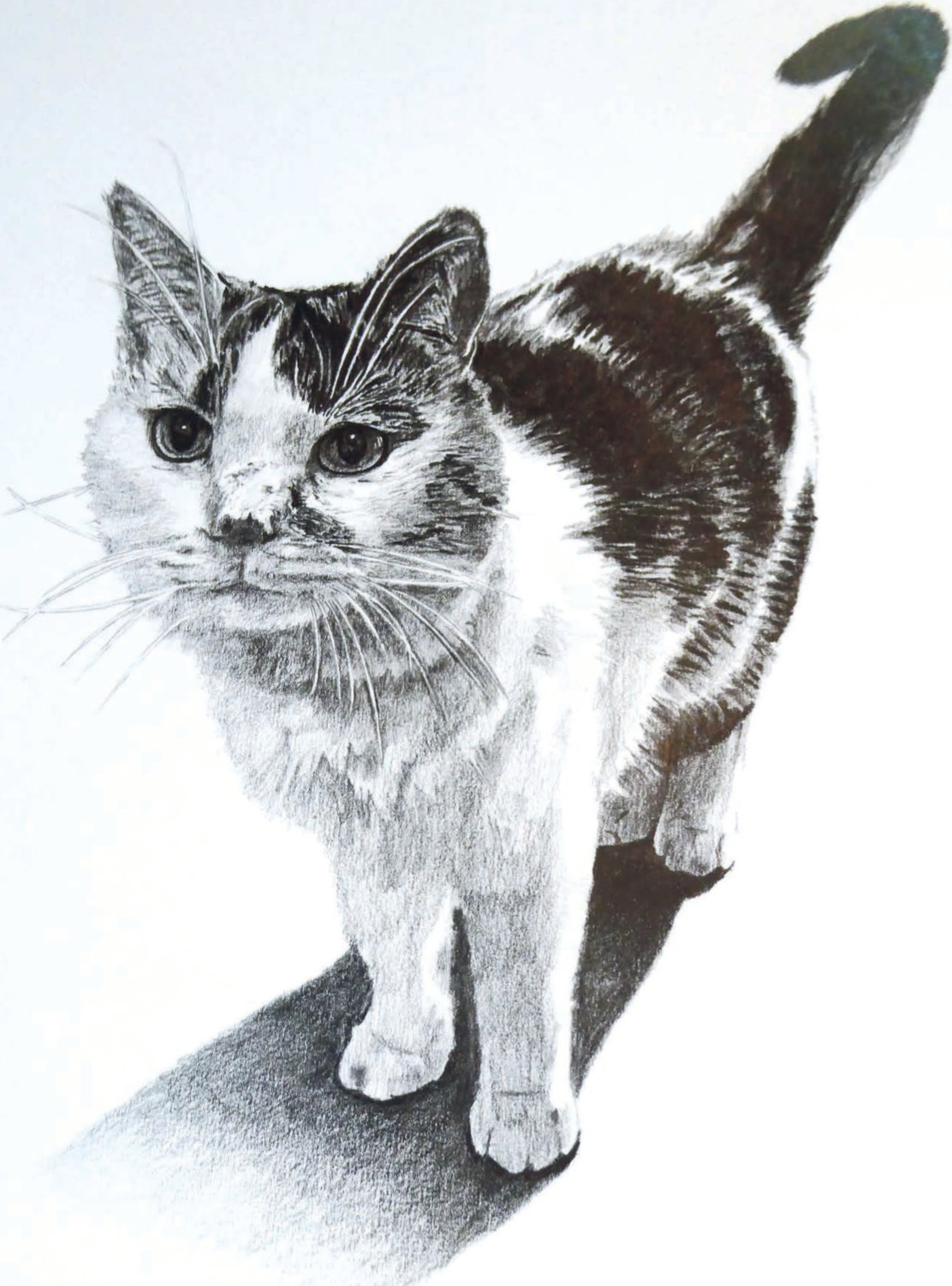
10 THE SKY

The final step was to paint the rest of the sky above the horizon in Cyan Blue. I deliberately avoided shading or colour gradation in the sky and cloud, leaving them as flat colour fields to draw the viewer's focus onto the meadow.



11 HONE THE DETAILS

The final touches included refining the details in the meadow, adding small flowers, and signing the painting along with the date. ◻



Pur-fect

Pencil artist **FREDERICK TERPSTRA** shows you how he paintined this commission of a pet in pencil, revealing his techniques for tone and shadow

THIS DRAWING WAS A COMMISSION I did of a tabby that I decided to name "curious cat" because of the look on its face. I really liked the contrast and all the details, such as the fur, that make the drawing quite realistic. The eyes appealed to me too, being very interesting to draw with different shades of grey. I also liked the fact that the shadow underneath it makes the cat stand out more, against the contrast of the white fur. This was one of my older commissions, a bit different to my style today, where I draw people in scenes in the city, usually in public spaces, interested by the interaction amongst the people. However, this is a great drawing to start with before going onto portraits of people. With animals, the drawing, especially the face, doesn't have to look exactly like the photo in order to recognise that it's a cat or to recognise the cat itself. This makes it less frustrating and gives you more of a feeling of success in the beginning, whereas with people's faces it needs to be very precise and can quickly look a bit strange if there are mistakes. It was really nice to be able to sit down and draw again after the hustle and bustle of my exhibitions in the Royal Academy and with the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris. ***frederickterpstra.com***

FREDERICK'S MATERIALS

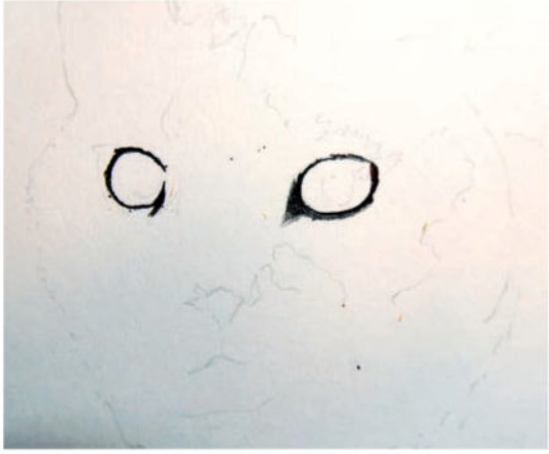
Pencils
Carand'ache Grafwood 6B, 2B and 2H pencils

Support
Academia Fabriano artist paper 120 g/m2 A4

Läufer eraser

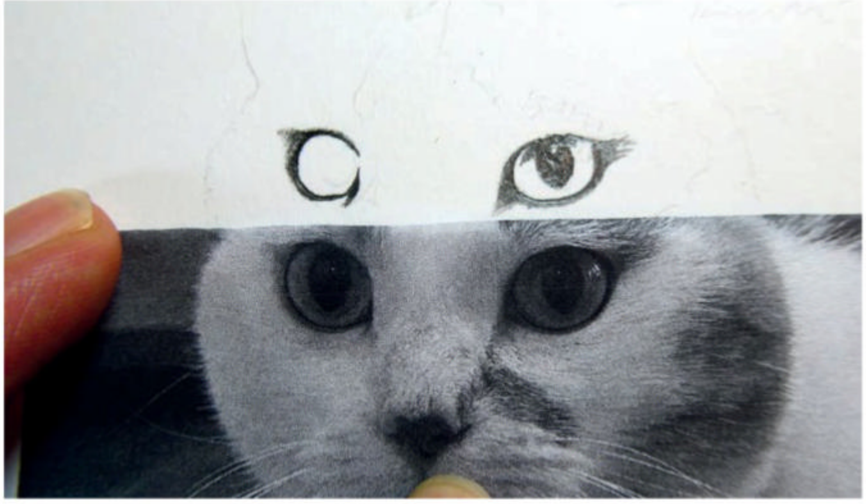
Faber-Castell Art kneadable eraser

Kum Automatic Sharpener



1 THE BASICS

First, I draw the outlines of the animal and lightly draw the main lines to sketch with 2H. It's important to get this down well because it's quick and easy to rub out mistakes at this stage, which gets harder later on once darker pencils have been used. It also avoids having to rub out lots of details that you might have spent a lot of time on.

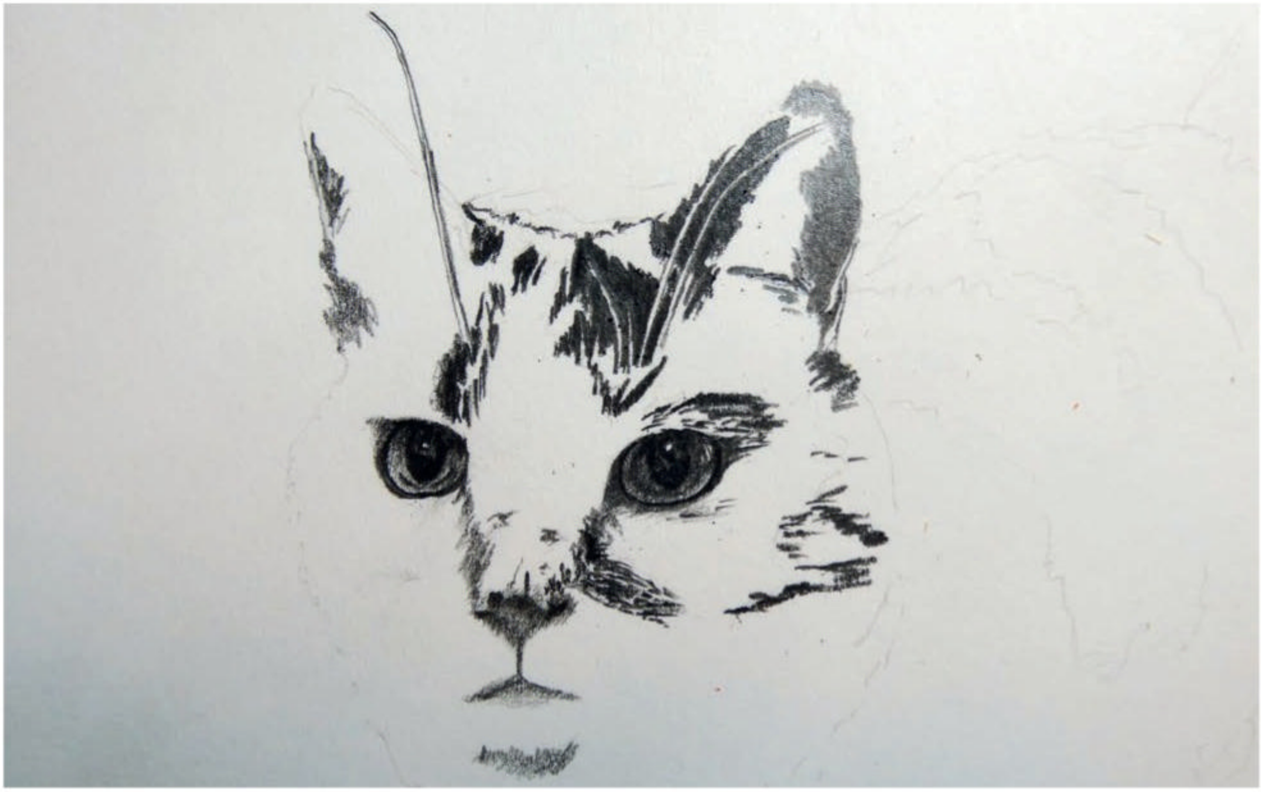


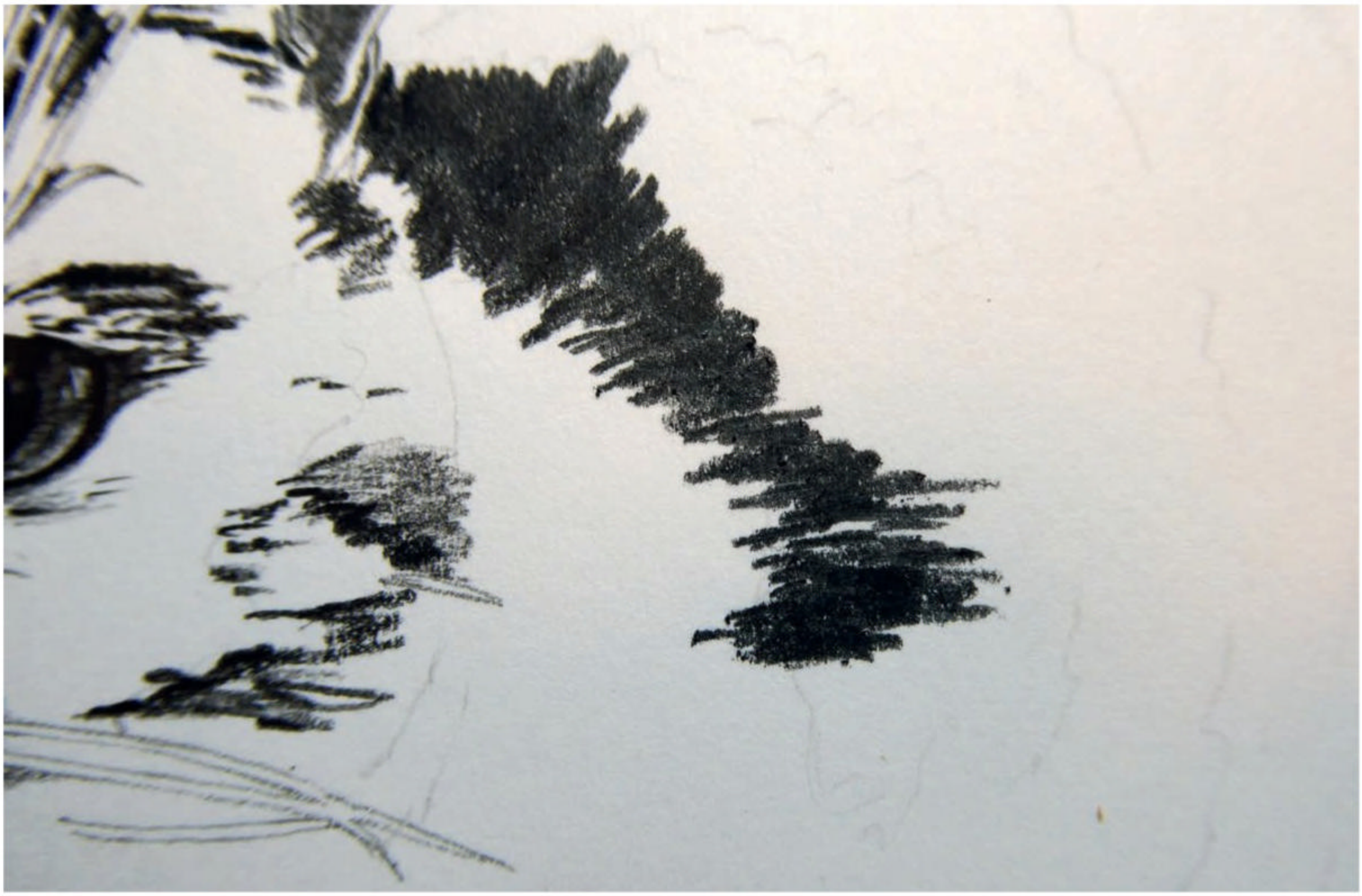
2 GET THE EYES RIGHT

I then start going over the outlines of the eyes with 6B and then around it in 2B to finish them off, comparing the size with the photo printed to size. It's important to get the eyes right, because this makes humans or animals look realistic. Be careful to leave some white of the paper here for the reflection on the eyes; my tip is to first purposely draw the outline of the white circle bigger than it should be to leave room for mistakes. ▶

3 KEEP YOUR PENCILS SHARP

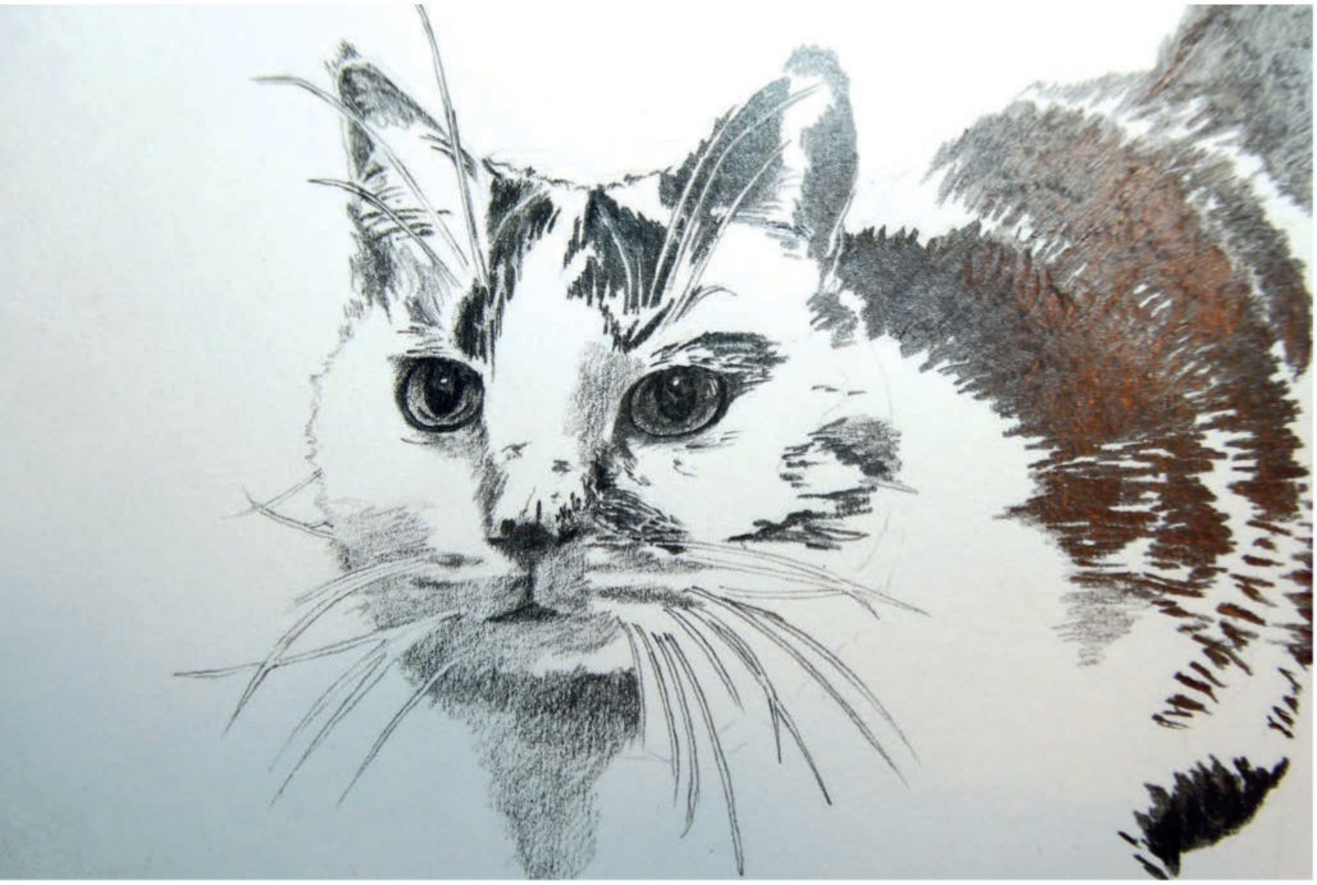
It's important to really sharpen the pencil well to a point in order to get some thin lines and add in details. I did the nose and mouth with 6B for the darker lines and 2B around this. Lots of parts of the cat are like this, shading around the 6B lines with 2B gives a more natural and realistic look. I added in the whiskers by shading around the outlines, leaving the whiskers as the white of the paper.





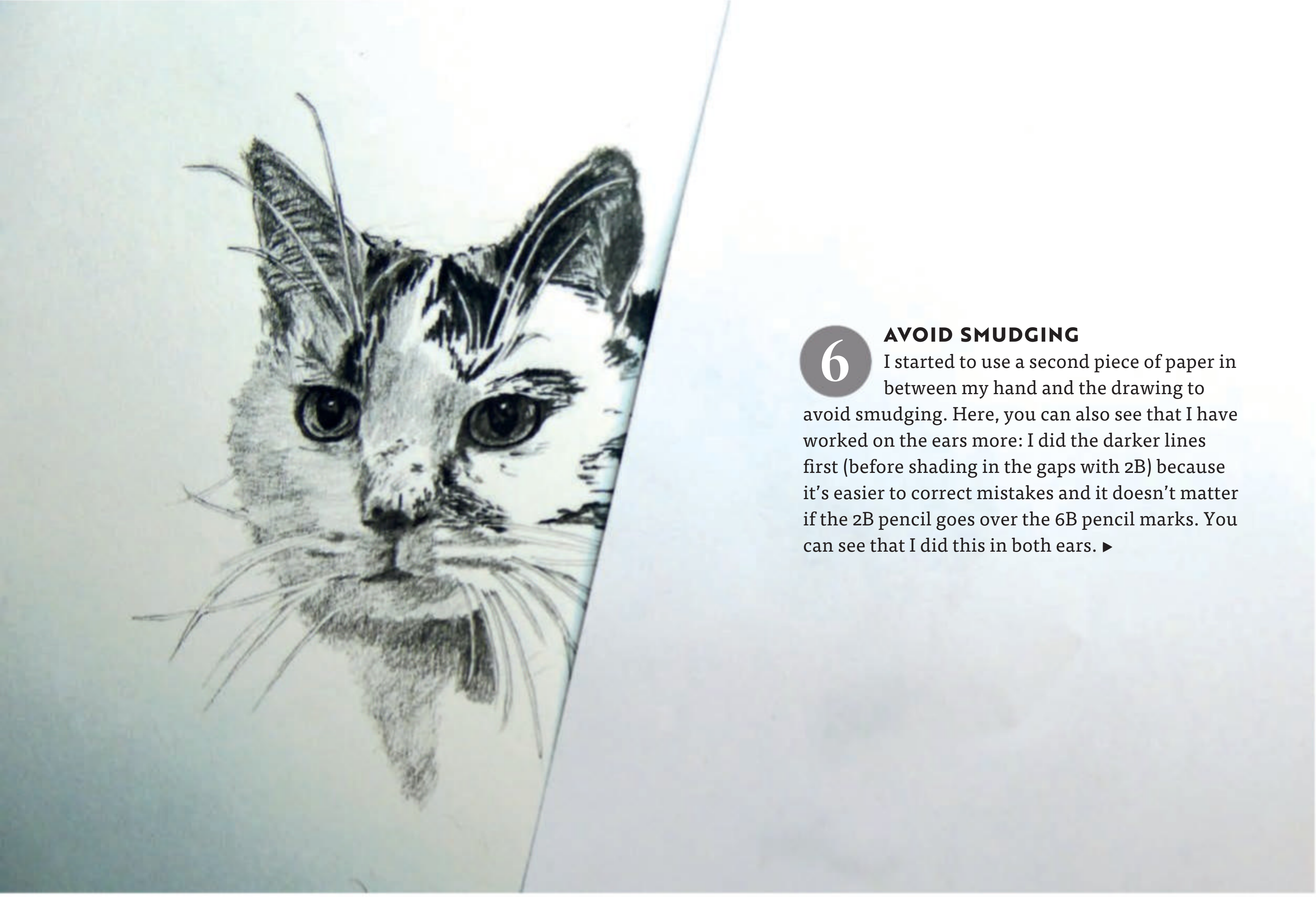
4 DRAW AN IMPRESSION OF THE FUR

I started to add details of the fur (with a 6B), which don't have to be exactly like the photo, but should just mimic similar patterns, leaving white spaces in between the black lines. See how I did jagged lines here, being careful to leave some white areas to mimic white hairs. These jagged lines follow the shape of the cat, first pointing upwards and then pointing to the side. I then started to use 2B on the cat's right cheek continuing the pattern.



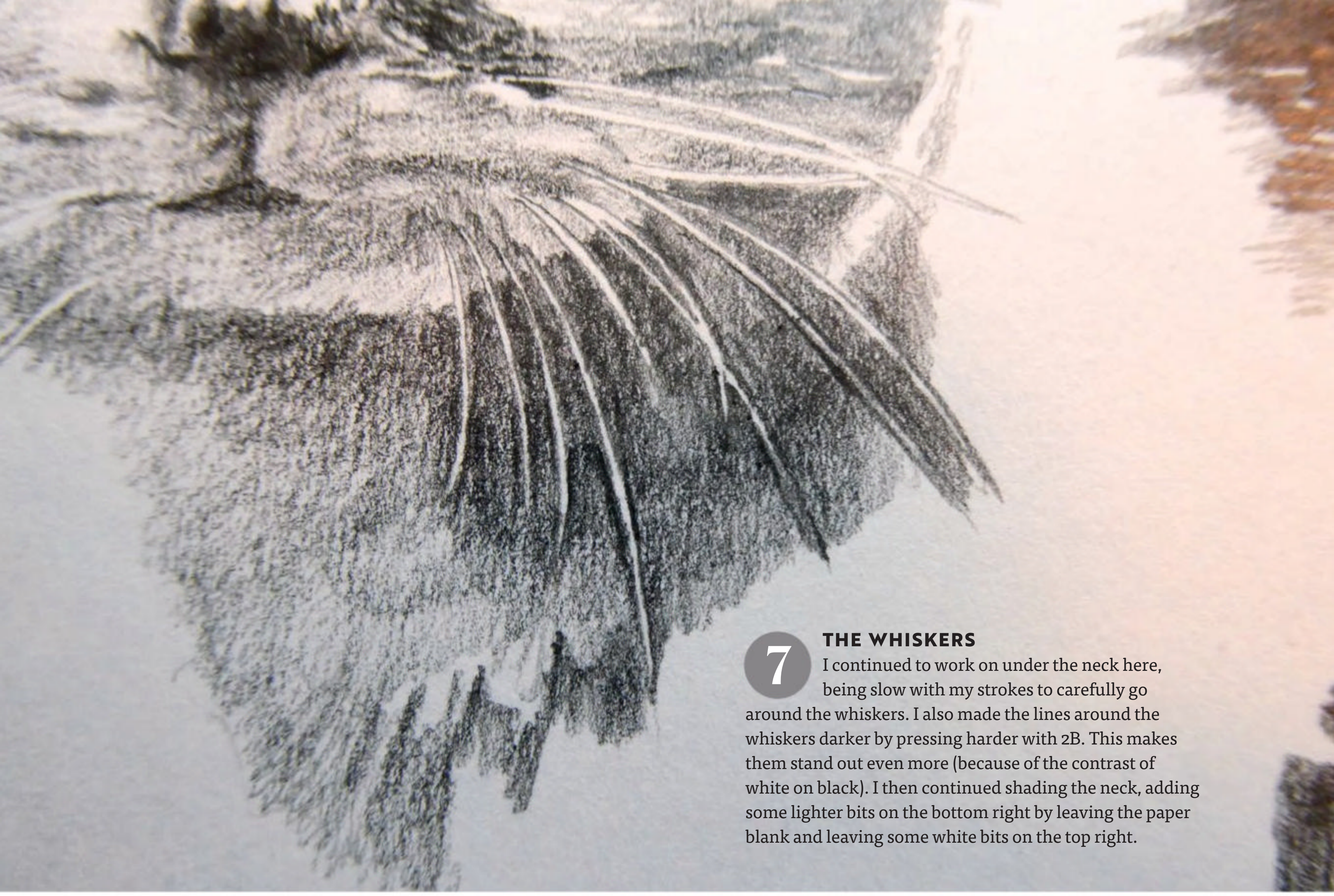
5 ADD THE DARKS

Here, I started to shade under the neck with 2B, pressing harder for the darker areas, where the shadows are darker. I also added some shading with 2B under and around the eyes as well as up in the ears. Like in the photo, for the ears I did some darker lines curving around the inside of the cat's right ear and darker 6B areas on its left ear.



6 AVOID SMUDGING

I started to use a second piece of paper in between my hand and the drawing to avoid smudging. Here, you can also see that I have worked on the ears more: I did the darker lines first (before shading in the gaps with 2B) because it's easier to correct mistakes and it doesn't matter if the 2B pencil goes over the 6B pencil marks. You can see that I did this in both ears. ▸

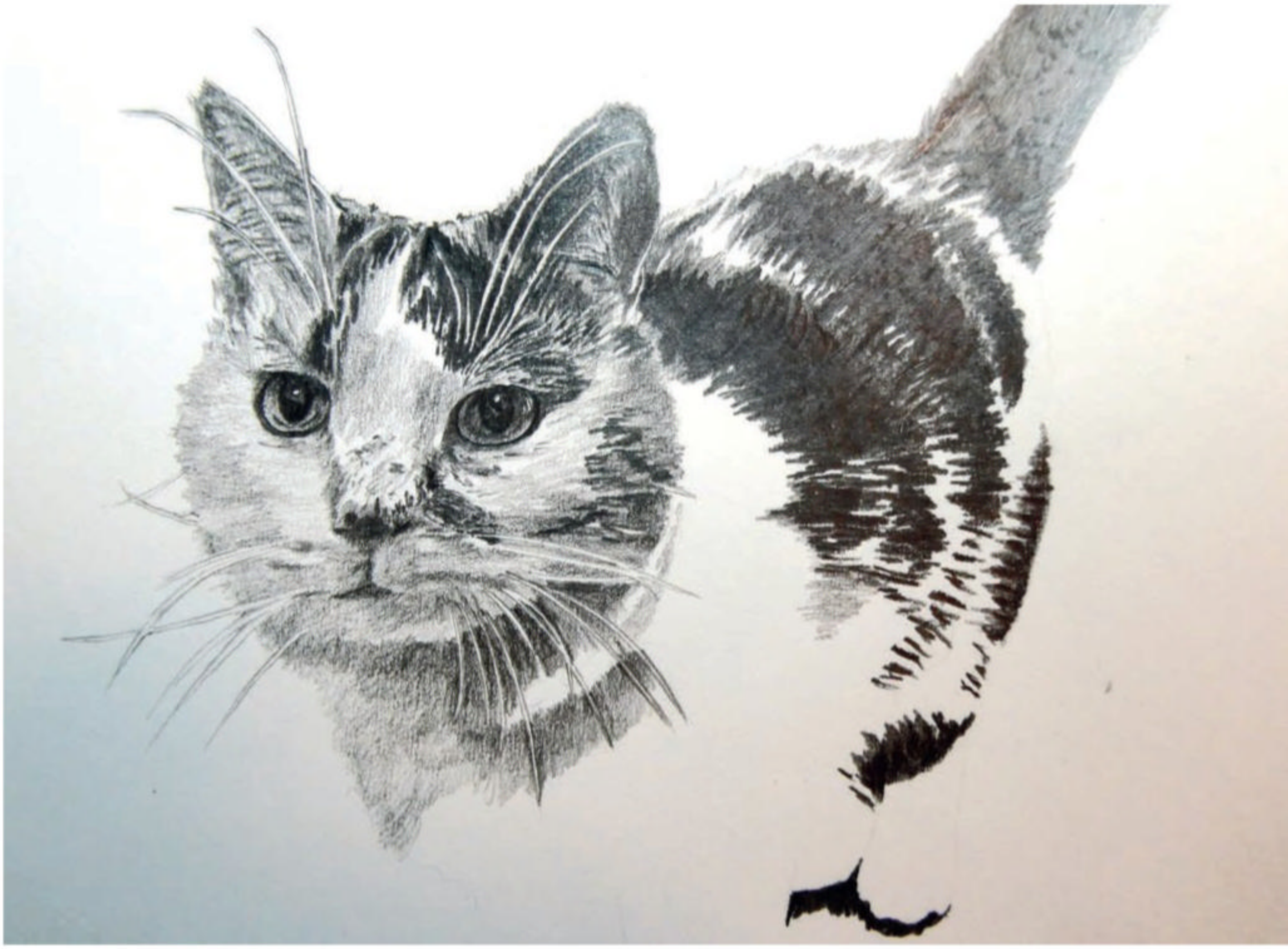


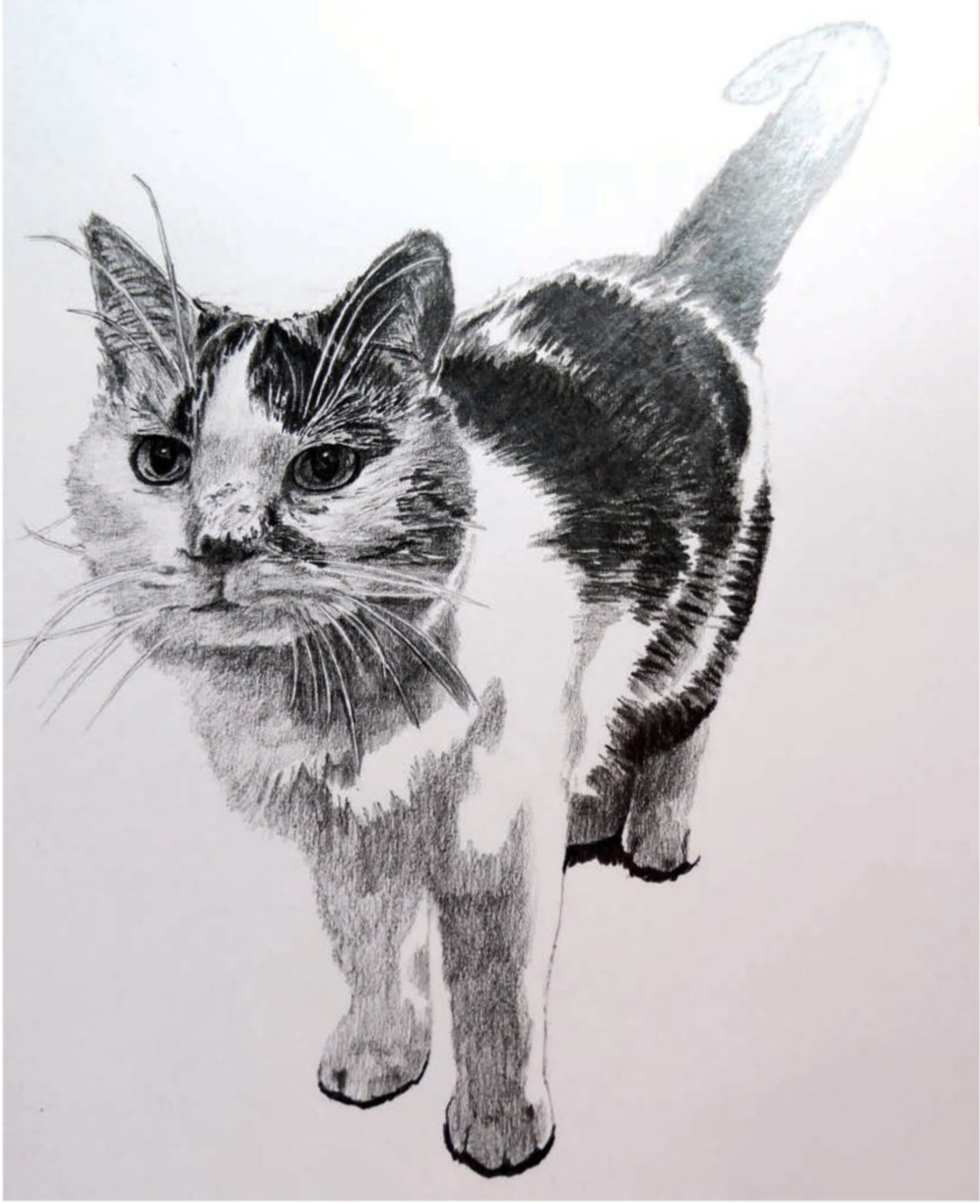
7 THE WHISKERS

I continued to work on under the neck here, being slow with my strokes to carefully go around the whiskers. I also made the lines around the whiskers darker by pressing harder with 2B. This makes them stand out even more (because of the contrast of white on black). I then continued shading the neck, adding some lighter bits on the bottom right by leaving the paper blank and leaving some white bits on the top right.

8 DETAILS ON THE CAT'S FACE

I finished off the fur on the right side of the cat's face. The hairs on the face are shorter, thus I did little black lines, and then went over the gaps with 2B. I also left some gaps, as white lines, to mimic some white hairs. You can also see that I added some more details to the nose and under the cat's right eye: some little 6B lines and some 2B shading.



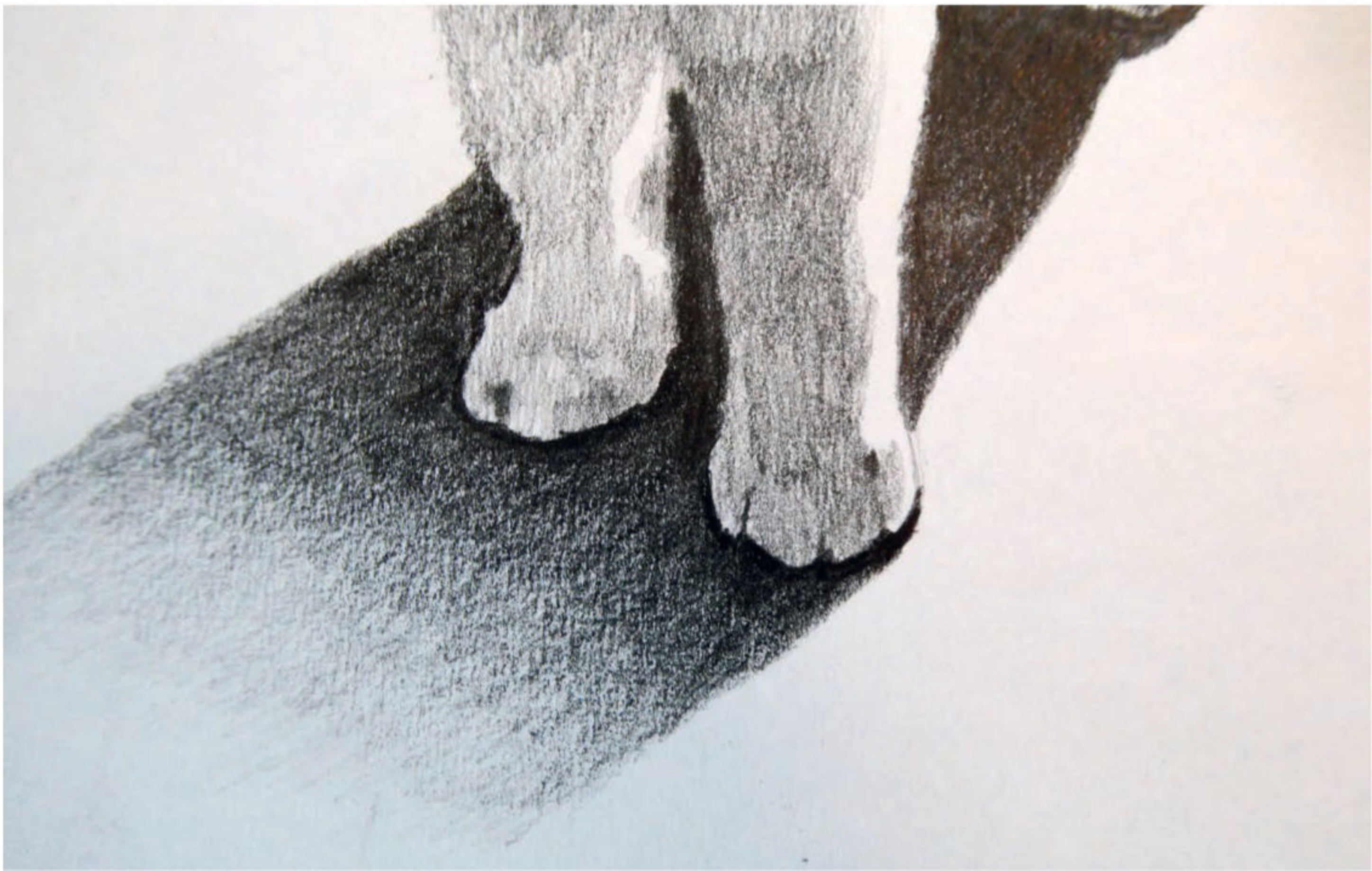


9 THE LEGS AND PAWS

After refining the fur and the tail on the cat's body, by going over spaces in between the 6B marks with 2B, I then went on to do the cat's legs and paws. Here, I used 2B, once again for the darker parts pressing harder and leaving white spaces out for the lighter parts of fur. For in between the toes I used a 6B.

10 THE SHADOWS

This is a close-up shot of some of the areas with shadows. I carefully and slowly went around the outlines of the paws on top of the shadow with 6B. This makes it then easier and I can be quicker when I then shade in the rest of the shadow, because I don't have to worry about shading over the paws by accident. I used 6B close to the paws and legs and then 2B as the shadow gets further away from the cat, slowly releasing the pressure. ◻



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Dr Lucy Worsley until recently was joint chief curator at Historic Royal Palaces and is the author of several books. She has presented TV shows for various channels.

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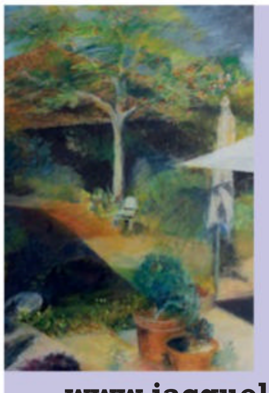

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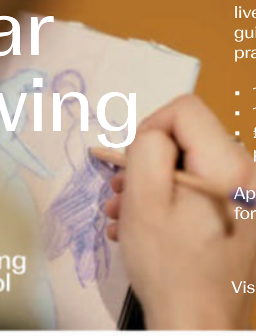

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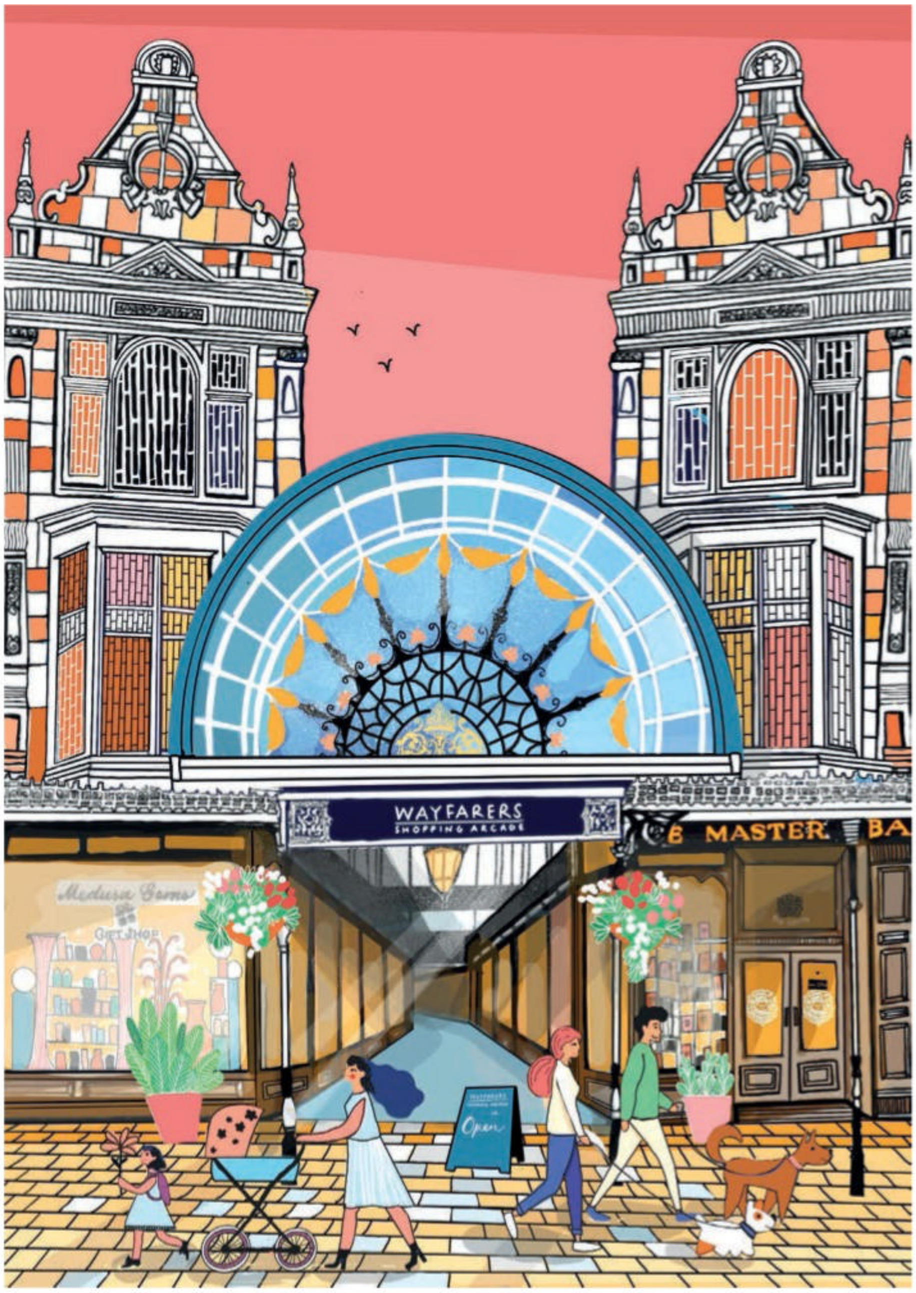

Wayfarers Arcade, ink, watercolour and digital, 30x21cm

Picture this

To conclude the magazine, we ask an artist to tell us why one of their paintings is so important to them. This month, we speak to ink, watercolour and digital artist **RUTHIE**

Standing beneath its grand glass roof, with the light filtering through ironwork that's stood for over a century, you can't help but feel the wonder – of time.

Built 125 years ago, the arcade is more than just a beautiful Victorian building in Southport. It's a living memory. Generations have passed through its doors – shoppers, dreamers, lovers, locals, travellers – each leaving behind something unseen but deeply felt.

As an artist with a studio inside the arcade, I experience that magic daily. Walking in each morning, I'm always struck by the same thought: how many others have walked this path before me? It's not nostalgia, exactly. It's something deeper; a sense of belonging to a buiulding that remembers.

That's what inspired me to illustrate it – to honour its grace, its history and its quiet soul. Capturing Wayfarers on paper was like drawing a place out of time. I wanted to show not just the architecture, but the atmosphere: the soft gold light, the stillness, the way it seems to hold its breath even as the world rushes by outside.

The illustration is a tribute to a place that has endured, adapted and remained beautiful through the years. But for me, it's more than a project; it's personal. Wayfarers isn't just where I work. It's a source of inspiration, a keeper of stories and a daily reminder that beauty and history live on best when they are shared. ***ruthieillustrations.co.uk*** ◻

Mary McCartney, Being Frida, London, 2000, Giclée Print,
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